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Harriet

MALPAS;

OR,

LE POURSUIVANT D'AMOUR.

A Romance.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CAVALIER."

Now hold your mouth pour charite,
Bothe knighte and lady fre,
And herkeneth to my spell,
Of bataille and of chevalrie,
Of ladies' love and druerie,
Anon I wol you tell.

CHAUCER'S "*Canterbury Tales*."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE.

Right honoured and dread Lord,

THAT I have taken the liberty of addressing this epistle to Your Grace, is not, as might be imagined, the consequence of your known respect for literature, your love of science, or patronage of the arts, in which, I am proud to say, you are emulated by many men of rank in our native country; but is the effect of a cause far less flattering to Your Grace, than agreeable to your correspondent.

If the feudal tenures still subsisted, I should now be a retainer of Your Grace, as it is probable my ancestors were tenants of Your Grace's; and I have

still so much clannish affection in my blood, as to look up with reverence to the descendant of that great house, which, in times like those depicted in the following sheets, hath given shelter and protection to the authors of my being.

I would not be understood to mean, that I regret the abolition of the feudal tenures, which banished (the fiend) slavery from England, or the iron times cotemporary with their existence. For though the feudal government of this country was conducted with all the wisdom of which that complicated system was capable, and was, indeed, managed with much less turbulence and disorder, than those of France, Germany, or the other kingdoms of a Gothic constitution, yet, in its analysis, there will be found too many things to deprecate, and, among others, the overgrown power of that order to which Your Grace belongs, the nobles, to cause the regret of any wise man at its declension and fall. And

although in the history of the wars and tournaments, the splendour, pomp, and revelry of ancient times, we are led to imagine that glory, true honour, and magnificence, had attained their meridian height, since kings, as at the elevation of their savage progenitors upon the electoral buckler, were the leaders of a band of heroes, whose affections were knit unto their sovereign by the renown of his warlike exploits, and beauty, unaided by the glare of ornament, or the fortuitous accession of wealth, was worshipped as the star which guided the chivalry to acts of danger and enterprize; yet, it must be confessed, there was an opposite side of the picture, which showed as leaden and meagre, as this one appears golden and imposing. And, first, though it be true that, in this kingdom, the power and courage of the barons served to counterbalance the weight of sovereign authority, and to prevent the feudal constitution from degenerating, as it did in

other countries, into a perfect despotism, yet it must ever remain a problem with the learned, whether the violence with which the barons executed their plans of opposition, the rigour with which they exercised the functions of government when the sway was in their hands, and the utter contempt in which they regarded, and with which they treated the liberties of their plebeian countrymen, were not more galling, more intemperate, and more unjust, than could have been the conduct of any king, however despotic and tyrannical. But the private passions of the English nobility caused more distress and danger to their country than even their public ambition. Those who pretended to extort laws from the sovereign, for the safeguard and protection of liberty, were the first to trample on them, and to tyrannize over their fellow-subjects. Each noble, vigilant alone in the protection of his own retainers and vassalage, esteemed it

his right to carry fire and sword, ruin and desolation, among those of his countrymen that differed with him in party, or who had become his foes by some act of private, perhaps unwitting, aggression. The potent baron, possessed of almost regal privileges, held it a degradation of his rank, to suffer trial of any cause, wherein he was party before the king's justices ; and we have, at least, one example upon record, where the judges, in the reign of Henry III., having proceeded to try a cause, of which Fulk de Brent, a baron of great power, was one of the parties, the exasperated noble dispatched his brother and an armed force, with directions to seize upon the justices and bring them before him. Two of them escaped ; but the third, less fortunate, fell into his hands, was conveyed by him to Bedford castle, and treated with all the cruelty and indignity the tyrant's malice could invent. And, according to the historian, Matthew

Paris, the same shameless violator of the law, had thirty verdicts given against him in the trials of novel-disseisin, in each of which he was heavily fined; every assize being for the forcible occupation of the lands of his less powerful neighbours. But instead of the executive of the law being, as in these days, of power sufficient to eject the disseisor, to levy the fines awarded against him, and to punish him for his flagrant aggression upon its authority, the whole kingdom was constrained to arm against the rebel; and it was not without much difficulty that a large and regular army could force him to sue for mercy.

And, even in the baron's own demesne, his protection was seldom exercised towards his vassals, except in the single article of personal preservation. The privileges and immunities claimed by each noble over his retainers, both free and bound, rendered them entirely subject to his will and caprice. Under the

custom of Gwabr-merched, no vassal could marry his daughter, without first surrendering her to the lust of his lord, or paying a heavy commutation. The privilege which many nobles enjoyed of pit and gallows, is thus quaintly developed by Skene. “*Erectio furcarum est meri imperii et altæ justitiæ, et significat dominium æris, quia suspensi pendent in ære: et merum imperium consistit in quatuor, sicut sunt quatuor elementa. In ære, ut hi qui suspenduntur, — in igne, quando quis comburitur propter maleficium — in aquâ, quando quis ponitur in culeo et in mare projicitur, ut parricida, vel in amnem immergitur ut fœmina furti damnata: in terra, cum quis decapitur et in terram prosternitur.*” And by the term *literatura* was implied a license to vassals by their lords to put their children to school, which, without such authority, would have been denounced as an infraction of tenure.

It would be an easy matter to write a volume on the subject of those oppres-

sions which our ancestors endured under the feudal system ; but I think I have said enough to convince Your Grace, that we (of the commons) have much to be thankful for in the change that has taken place, with very little to regret of that which has been relinquished. If there be any circumstance which can now occasion dissatisfaction, it is that the statute which abrogated the feudal tenures, should have left us a badge of our ancient slavery in the leet, copyhold, and manorial courts. For although Your Grace's seneschal (par example) does not, as in times of yore, appear before the suitors carrying a look of austere superiority, and weighing in a cheap balance the lives and properties of the tenantry, nor harnessed with *mail et cinctus gladio*, yet the manner in which he runs over the muster, the fines which he imposes for absence *, and the many

* I was very lately visited with the fine of 2*d.* for being absent when the suitors' names were called

little arrogancies inseparable from an office of this nature, induce a hearty desire that such relics of ancient barbarity had consorted with messieurs grand-serjeantie, knight-service, and their kindred, in bidding adieu to this nation ; and were I a member of either house, (as Your Grace) it should be my chief glory, and a glorious achievement it would be, to rescue my native soil from the last remaining fetter of feudal slavery, to drive the evil genius of the north from his last lurking-place, to crumble the last fortility of the barbarians into dust and powder. Forgetting the paltry advantages to be derived from the continuance of these courts, I would,

over, which, as I was then engaged in writing this epistle to Your Grace, I trust Your Grace's steward will be directed to refund ; and as it hath ever been allowed to the fraternity of authors to be absent when it listed them, I hope it will appear but reasonable to Your Grace to order a general exemption in my favour.

like Cato, mindful only of my country's weal, continually thunder out, "Carthago delenda est." But I have done my duty to my fellow-citizens: "I have warned ye," saith Dr. Raffles; "be your blood upon your heads."

To my general readers I shall offer no apology for any little deviation from historical fact that may appear in the following pages: they are welcome to find out more than I shall here reveal, and I must be content with their criticism. But to men so profoundly inquisitive as Your Grace, so acquainted with the minute bearings of history, and so capable of detecting a discrepancy, however trivial or remote, it becomes me to lay myself, in some measure, open, and to disclose the liberties which I have thought it necessary to take with the recording muse. These liberties, however, extend little further than the manner in which King Edward the Second fell into the hands of his

enemies. It is affirmed by Walsingham, and the other historians, “ that Edward, seeking an escape to Ireland, was driven by contrary winds upon the coast of Wales, where he was forced to land ; and that he took refuge in the abbey of Neath. There he intended to remain until the wind became fair, or he could devise some other means of quitting England : but a report being abroad, that he was somewhere concealed in Wales, the queen dispatched in quest of him Henry of Lancaster, who, by his diligence, and a reward of two thousand pounds, promised to any person who should take the younger Despenser, soon gained a knowledge of the king’s situation, and made him and his attendants prisoners. From the abbey of Neath, Lancaster conveyed his captives to Monmouth castle, and thence, by the queen’s order, to Kenilworth.”

The latter part of this narration Your Grace will find altered in my Romance ;

but I trust not so extravagantly as to disfigure the truth, and excite disgust in the minds of honest and impartial critics. The fact is, that, instead of the king being captivated by the Earl of Lancaster at the abbey of Neath, I have done that for him which he doubtless endeavoured to effect himself, raised a party in his favour, a circumstance that, from the turbulent state of the Welsh at that period, had his affairs been conducted with common prudence, might certainly have been accomplished. A Welsh chieftain organizes a force for his service, but is defeated by a baron of the marches, (the Lord of Malpas,) which occasions the royal party to fall into the hands of the marcher, by whom the king is treacherously sold to his enemies. Thus, instead of being conveyed to Monmouth, Edward is taken to Malpas, and thence to Kenilworth, a deviation from history I trust not unpardonable ; and if some cynical antiquary

should exclaim, that he never heard of an abbey having existed at Malpas, I will confess the fact, provided he will allow me to transplant the remains of the great monastery at Bangor, which had been destroyed long before this time, to the one of my own creation ; otherwise I will boldly defy him to prove that an abbey could not by possibility have been founded there after the formation of Domesday, and before the account taken in the reign of Henry the Eighth at the suppression of religious houses.

I know of no other discordance between the facts related by historians and my Romance, except it be that I have described King Edward the Third as having quitted Nottingham Castle, at the time of Mortimer's seizure, to reside at a convent without the town ; whereas he is said to have lodged at a house within the fortress. But this is questionable, as, in order to gain the subterranean passage communicating with the castle

through which Edward and his associates gained an entrance, he was obliged to pass the walls, which were doubtless well guarded by Mortimer's faction.

For the manners, customs, costume, &c., I have nothing to plead: I have described them with the pages of history and antiquity extended before my eyes, and with the facts themselves engraven on my heart. Your Grace will be able to judge whether I have seen darkly, or whether the sun of information has reflected a genuine light upon my studies. The contents of the following sheets have cost me much study and reflection, and if they afford any pleasure to my readers, they will answer the purposes for which they were intended.

With sentiments of profound veneration,

I have the honour to be,

Your Grace's obedient

and humble Servant,

LEE GIBBONS.

Nov. 23. 1821.

MALPAS.

CHAP. I.

Out, alas! what a grief is this
That princes' subjects cannot be true,
But still the devil hath some of his
Will play their parts whatsoever ensue;
Forgetting what a grievous thing
It is to offend the anointed king!
Alas for woe! why should it be so?
This makes a sorrowful heigh ho!

King of Scots and Andrew Browne.

THE town of Malpas in Cheshire, situated near the boundaries of Shropshire and Wales, is now of very little extent and of less importance. It consists of a few score houses rudely built, and, perhaps, half a dozen of a better style of architecture, which serve to show that it was once a place of greater consider-

ation than it is at present. The houses of a ruder fabrication, are of that kind usually termed post and peverel, from their being formed of timber beams branched out in various directions, having the intermediate spaces filled up with mortar or plaster. These give it an appearance of antiquity, and its inhabitants, of a primitive character, have doubtless copied the manners of their forefathers from time immemorial. But if the town itself has few charms for the eye of the traveller, the country which surrounds it will afford him every gratification. Malpas stands on the very summit of a hill, declivitous on all sides, but more particularly on the western, which, sloping down with a gentle descent, is lost in an immense valley, composing, in times of yore, part of the western marches of the principality. This valley is watered by the beautiful river Dee, which, meandering through the lower grounds, renders them as fertile as they are delightful. The town of Wrexham is distant about twelve miles, and, beyond it, the Welsh mountains arise in grand succes-

sion, one above the head of another, until the more remote are lost in the obscurity of distance. About twelve miles to the north of Wrexham is the ancient metropolis of Cheshire. The spires and towers of its churches at this day present a fine appearance, from the summit of the hill whereon Malpas stands; and the effect of the picture is not lessened by its out-line being filled up with several isolated villages and churches, which are sprinkled throughout the rich and well-wooded valley. The eastern horizon is formed by a range of bold, rocky, and sterile mountains called Broxton or Bickerton Hills, (at the foot of which are the ruins of Harding Castle), and which, running northward, skirt Vale Royal and the forest De la Mer. At the troubled period which it is our intention to commemorate, (the latter part of the reign of the unfortunate Edward II.), the features of Malpas and the surrounding country wore an expression different from that which they now exhibit. The Welsh, who had been but recently re-

duced to subjection by the present king's father, were constantly in a state of turbulent excitation, and, had they not been held down by an overwhelming force, would, doubtless, have endeavoured to regain their freedom. In truth, they were much oppressed by those English barons, who held castles on their confines, and were termed *Marchiones de Marchia Walliæ*, who had their private laws, "*et potestatem vitæ et necis*," like petty kings. These privileges they executed with an unsparing rigour; and, under the pretext of punishing the Welsh chieftains for the breach of their arbitrary, and ill-understood laws, the lords marchers frequently overran the Welsh border; pillaging and destroying the whole country, burning the castles of those who opposed them, and holding their bodies captive, unless released at an exorbitant ransom. Such a system of oppression could not fail to rouse the hardy mountaineers, who had struggled desperately to retain their independence, and who showed, by their readiness to retaliate, that they had not lost their

courage with their liberty. They did, indeed, retaliate ; and with such circumstances of savage barbarity, that the outrages of the Goths and Huns upon the inhabitants of Italy, become softened in the comparison. The whole border between England and Wales was ruined and desolated. The people withdrew from their hamlets and rustic dwellings, retreating with their cattle and household stuff into the fortified towns and castles ; and, at length, the country was so completely destroyed, that the fierce adversaries were constrained for a time to give up their expeditions, having (like Alexander) nothing more to win. This scene of devastation extended from Chester (which was considered the leading barrier town on the border) on both sides of the Dee by way of Malpas into Shropshire, and thence to the embouchure of the Severn. The barony of Malpas was, at this time, possessed by a chieftain of Norman descent, named Bertrand du Chatelet, and who, as a marcher, was entitled to have his castle and town fortified. This was also the

more necessary as a monastery of black friars, “sub norma Benedicti famulantes,” adjoined the baron’s afforciamment; and, to the great scandal of all Christian men, as the monks said, the bloody Welsh spared neither houses of religion nor their members. That rich and magnificent order of Gothic architecture, which came to perfection in the subsequent reign, did not make its appearance in the abbey of Malpas; for although it was strongly built, and the architect had made some attempts at ornament by the formation of corbetels or niches in the exterior wall, wherein were deposited the rude figures of divers saints, and had also erected a lanterium or cupola on the steeple of the church, whereon he had endeavoured to engrave the arms of the founder; yet its appearance was far from being grand or imposing, and did, indeed, seem rather a house of religion, than one of those stupendous palaces, which afterwards became the habitation of the regular clergy. But if the outward appearance of Malpas Abbey was plain and simple, the rich revenues at-

tached to it by numerous grants from the neighbouring Barons, amply compensated for its lack of ornament. It had, besides, another source of emolument peculiar to itself; the like privilege being had by no other foundation on the Welsh border. This was the celebrated Fridstoll, or chair of peace, which a great author calls "a place privileged by the Prince for the safeguard of men's lives that are offenders, founded upon the law of mercy, and upon the great reverence, honour, and devotion, which the Prince beareth to the place whereto he granted such a privilege." The Cathedra pacis sheltered felons and traitors, provided that, within forty days, they confessed their crimes and submitted to banishment. If, during that time, they were expelled by any layman, (though the King's officer), he was, *ipso facto*, excommunicated, and, if by a clerk, he was instantly made irregular. This privilege, of course, drew numberless offenders to the Monastery, who paid handsomely for their security and entertainment; and often, when of rank, made

gifts of lands on going into exile, more particularly when the crime for which they sought sanctuary was murder, or any other offence which laid hold upon their consciences. An endowment which would support a few monks to say masses for the souls of their murdered victims, they were informed, would appease the vengeance of the Almighty; and they were glad to purchase acquittances from spiritual destruction at so cheap a rate. The superior was one of those ecclesiastical lords termed mitred abbots, so called because they had obtained from Rome the privilege of wearing the mitre, ring, gloves, and crosier of a Bishop; and the Abbey was well able to keep up the state of its head, being one of the richest foundations throughout England.

Having said thus much of the Monastery and its dependancies, we will now speak of the fortress of the Baron du Chatelet. About a bow shot beyond the outer court of the Abbey, a conical hill, elevated about fifty yards from the surrounding plain, sustained the peel or fortress, which, occupying the entire

surface of the hill top, sat like the crown of towers on the head of Cybele ; a very wide and deep ditch surrounded the foot of the hill, and rendered the castle nearly inexpugnable. The towers and walls were kernelled, that is, built with cranies or notches for shooting arrows or cross-bows, as were all the castles on the border ; and over the portal was a machecollation or device of war, resembling a grate, through which, in time of siege, those within the castle might annoy the assailants with scalding water, the feu grecquois, or any other offensive liquid. A strong and high wall enclosed the whole town ; and, at the gate of this exterior defence, barriers (or railings of wood) were erected, strengthened with closely set ribeaudeaux, or pointed stakes, which could not easily be dislodged by the enemy. In short, no barrier town on the border was more completely fortified ; and there were very few whose strength of situation could be compared with this. The castle had usually a garrison of two hundred men at arms, besides twice the number

of stout varlets and archers who were quartered in the town.

The Baron du Chatelet, in his office as Lord Marcher, had the usual privileges of *furca et fossa*, or gallows and pit, a jurisdiction of punishing felons: men with hanging, and women with drowning, together with *infangthefe* and *outfangthefe*, *hebbberthefe*, *hansokne*, and *grithbrech*, *forstall*, *ferdwite*, and *frithwite*, with a vast number of other immunities, penalties, and mulcts, which are now only known to the scholar and antiquary.

The reign of Edward II. was one of trouble and misfortune, not only to the monarch himself, but also to his subjects, who were harassed by the constant wars and altercations maintained between the king and his favourites on one side, and the great Barons on the other. Little taught by the battle of Bannockburn, which the English lost more through want of unanimity and confidence in their leader, than lack of courage and discipline, (many instances of both being shown on that day on their part); the king continued

his favour to the Despensers without any regard to the complaints of the barons, who resolved to continue in rebellion against the royal authority, until they had driven those obnoxious favourites out of the country. The rebellion, our readers will remember, ended for that time with the decapitation of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, the King's cousin, at the castle of Pomfret in Yorkshire. This act of severity seemed for a short period to quell the spirits of the disaffected, but the arrogance of the younger Despenser, on whom the king had conferred the Earldom of Gloucester, soon raised him up an enemy too potent to crush. His haughtiness had divested him of all prudence, and so much did he count upon the King's affection, that he forgot to pay that respect to the Queen Isabella which was certainly her due from every subject. Isabella, cautious and prudent, but cruel and deceitful, gave little intimation of that disgust and hatred which the conduct of Gloucester had engendered in her breast; but began privately to intrigue with the barons of the Lan-

castrian party. They eagerly met her advances, and willingly coincided with any plan to humble the insolent favorite.

It happened at this time that the King of France, Charles the Fair, summoned Edward to do homage for Guienne, and the Queen, under the pretext that it would be dangerous for her husband to quit the kingdom, to which Despenser assented, advised him to resign the sovereignty of that province to his son, (afterwards Edward III.) and to send him over as homager in his stead. This expedient was thought feasible, and the prince joined his mother in France where she had been sometime on a mission to her brother, the king, and did the accustomed homage. Isabella, having the heir-apparent in her hands, now began to throw off the mask, and refused to return to England (though ordered by her husband) until the Despensers were banished the country. The king would not give up his favourites, and applied to the pope, who threatened the French monarch with ecclesiastical censures unless he sent the queen from his court.

Charles complied, and Isabella took refuge in Hainault, to the daughter of whose count, William of Hainault, she had already affianced the young Prince Edward. She remained in that country for some time, making great endeavours to raise an army; and her friends in England strove with unremitted diligence to gain over to her party all the English nobility, in which attempt they too fatally succeeded. Of the clergy, those who took part in the struggle were chiefly on the side of the queen, and among the warmest of her partisans, the abbot of Malpas was conspicuous. Sir Walter Marcel, in his early years, had joined the *fratres militiæ Templi Solomonis*, and taken the vows of their order: he had been in Palestine fulfilling the duties of his profession, and had fought long and valiantly, like a stout knight and a true, against the enemies of Christianity. Like most of the other brothers of the temple, Sir Walter concealed beneath his monastic vestments a heart incapable of repressing its passions and desires, and, in the course of his campaigns, he had for-

gotten his vow of chastity, and became father of a son, whose mother, a Greek slave, died in childbed, leaving the young Templar to the care of God and his father. He soon after returned to his native land; and, after placing his son in a situation proper for his maintenance, retired to the commandry of Temple Bruere in Lincolnshire, to which he had been attached before his voyage to Palestine. Here he remained in undisturbed seclusion, until the abolition of the order of Knights Templars. The Templars, from that poverty which had compelled their founders, Hugh de Paganis and Godfrey de Saint Audomar, to use the same steed, (in commemoration whereof, and to be mindful of humility, they had the figure of two men on one horse engraved on their seal,) had risen by their valour and abilities, and by the generosity of the Christian princes and nobility, who had enriched their order with gifts of lands throughout all Christendom, to a state of uncommon wealth and power. They had more than once, single handed, made war upon the Saracens with success;

and, at length, became as much dreaded and envied by the sovereigns of their own faith as by the Sultans of the unbelievers. The great wealth which, (in despite of their vow of poverty) they had acquired, added to the passions of fear and jealousy in the minds of the European sovereigns that of avarice; and, by a general combination, the Templars were seized and cast into prison, in almost every state of Europe. In France, scores of those gallant and accomplished knights were bound and burnt together like felons and traitors; nor could the high dignity of their Grand Master, John de Molay, nor his relationship to the best blood of France, purchase an exemption from that degrading fate. Those in England were, after some delay, proceeded against in a general council held at London, where a string of highly-charged and improbable articles was exhibited against them.

They were accused of heresy, idolatry, and most execrable blasphemy; of having deserted the King of Tarsus in a war with the Saracens, whereby he was killed,

his army defeated, and his only son made prisoner ; but none of these articles were proved. An author, master of the subject, says, “ Quamvis in multis essent accusati, nichil tamen inventum est quod de jure videretur statum illorum annullare.” — However, their extinction was predetermined ; and Pope Clement V. the creature of Philip le Bel, King of France, their insatiable enemy, abolished their order in a general council at Vienna, A. D. 1311, (4 Edw. II.) Their lands were afterwards given to the hospitallers or knights of St. John in England, by the stat. De terris Templ. 17 Edw. II. stat. 3. But, if the allegations against the Templars could have been proved by their powerful antagonists ; if they were, indeed, licentious and luxurious ; and if several of their fraternity at Jerusalem had fallen away from Christianity, and assumed the Mahometan faith ; these crimes, established beyond doubt, would not have been sufficient in *foro conscientiae* to cause the ruin and destruction of the whole order, much less to have authorised their corporal extirpation, as

in France and Germany. Equity, however, was no part of the policy of that age; and as the Templars, though rich and powerful, were unable to withstand the combined injustice of all the sovereigns of Europe, they sank beneath their oppressive edicts, without striking a blow in their own defence. It appears, that on their abolition they were held in much favour by the English clergy, both secular and regular; for the same author as we have above quoted, speaking of William de Grenefeld, Archbishop of York, who was contemporary with the order, says, "*Archiepiscopus Willielmus pietate motus super statu Templariorum suæ diocesis omni auxilio destitutorum eos in diversa suæ diocesis instituit monasteria, eisque; suo perpetuo vitæ necessaria ministrare præcepit.*"

Sir Walter Marcel entered the monastery of Malpas, where he renewed his vows, and exchanged the armour and horse of the church militant for black vestments, a shorn head, and the canon religiosorum. He was a man that had profited much by experience; and his

knowledge of the world, and the fame of his exploits in defence of Christianity, gave him a great weight and authority with his brethren. On the demise of Abbot Sylvester, who was at the head of the monastery when he joined the confrairie, he was unanimously elected in his place, and took the name of Ingulphus. In this dignity he had presided over the concerns of the abbey for some years, much to the satisfaction of his confreres, and greatly to the advantage of their temporal domination. The celebrated Roger Mortimer, Baron of Wigmore, had large demesnes on the Welsh border, and a castle, at which he frequently resided, some half dozen miles on the other side of the Dee, and within the principality. The contiguity of his estates to the abbey of Malpas, and the frequent conjunction of his vassals with those of the Baron du Chatelet in their predatory excursions, begat a mutual understanding between the spiritual and temporal peers; and, as Mortimer was then one of the greatest Barons of the kingdom, the abbot thought he could

do no better for his son, (the young Aubrey Marcel,) than place him as a page in his service. With him he would learn all knightly accomplishments, and become fitted for any station to which the interest of his father or of his lord might be enabled to advance him.

Aubrey had for some years attended Mortimer, and, for his gallantry in many expeditions, undertaken by the Baron of Wigmore against the Welsh, had received the honour of knighthood under his master's banner, when that rebellion broke out in which the Earl of Lancaster lost his life. Mortimer, who was one of the leaders, was made prisoner and committed to the Tower of London, whence he escaped by administering to his keepers a soporific potion, and with Sir Aubrey Marcel, who, during his lord's confinement, had enjoyed undisturbed the pleasures of the court, either because he was too young, or of too little consequence to excite suspicion, escaped to France, and set at defiance the anger and threats of his sovereign. On the arrival of the queen at Paris, the baron,

who had both an elegant person and captivating manners, insinuated himself into her confidence, and, eventually, into her heart; and, it is conjectured, that he first suggested that politic scheme by which the young prince Edward was inveigled into France under the mask of his doing homage for Guienne. In his desire of gaining over all persons of rank to the queen's party, Mortimer had communicated by letter with the Abbot Ingulphus, whom he found by no means backward to revenge upon the king the injuries which he, as a Templar, had suffered by the abrogation of the order in England. In short, he entered with his whole soul into the conspiracy, and became, instead of an accessory, a principal in the intended revolution. The Baron of Wigmore, pleased with his zeal, vowed to advance the fortunes of his son, and undertook to obtain for him a barony by grant from the crown, when the new order of things should be established; and, as an earnest of his intentions, preferred him to the service of the prince, with whom he soon became a favourite.

On the other hand, Ingulphus promised to use all his power, spiritual and temporal, to win over converts to their faction ; and engaged himself to begin with the Marcher du Chatelet, whose courage and martial experience, as well as his force of soldiery, might be of considerable assistance to their projects. The abbot had already broken the ice to du Chatelet, but had not found in him the acquiescence he expected. He was cautious and prudent in his commencement of an undertaking, though resolute and persevering when he had once engaged in it. Ambition was his ruling passion ; and, to say truth, he was calculating the advantages that might accrue to him, either by stedfast loyalty or disaffection to the king ; and would in no wise commit himself before he was assured that fortune clung to the party which he was about to adopt. He had, therefore, made circumstantial enquiries from the abbot of the strength, numbers, and rank of the malcontents ; so that he might judge of the probability of success ; and, after all, he was unwilling,

openly to declare for the queen, until he should be assured that she had landed in England with a power sufficient to put down all opposition. We have detailed these facts somewhat particularly, gentle reader, in order to give thine imagination a clear discernment of the state and condition of our personages when this work commences, and also to preserve that order in our story which is requisite to its being freely and faithfully understood.

CHAP. II.

Hither the solitary minstrel came,
 An honour'd guest, while the grim evening sky
 Hung lowering, and around the social flame
 'Tun'd his bold harp to tales of chivalry.

WARTON.

ONE morning in the beginning of the month of September, A. D. 1326, the warder of Malpas, stationed in his lodge over the portal, descried two men on horseback, riding gently towards the barriers. One of them seemed a man of quality by his equipments and bearing, and the other was evidently his servant by his livery and badge. When they came within the barriers, which were usually open, the foremost horseman cried, "Ho, warder, undo the gate, and give us entrance."

"By my faith," replied he, through the casement of the turret, "ye must tarry, the constable is at the castle, and

he must have knowledge of your pilgrimage before ye can enter."

"Then call him, sir knave!" cried the gentleman, "or send one of thy varlets; we have business with the Abbot Ingulphus."

"Come ye to the Fridstoll?" said the warder.

"If it be thy calling to ask questions," answered the stranger, "thou had'st better doff thy horn and girdle, and have thy head shorn at once."

"Gramercy! Sir Knight," cried the man, "I meant ye no ill by the question; but 'tis said Sir Roger Taillebois hath slain a verderor of Threap Forest, and we guess he will speed to the Hidell."

"Good varlet!" answered the gentleman, "do thine office, and quit thy gossip. — Either admit us without further parley, or call your constable"

"That will I do readily!" said the warder, and applying his mouth to his bugle, he blew a long blast. "The red squire will attend ye anon, Sir Knight."

The gentleman dismounted, and gave his horse to his retainer. He was clothed

in a garment, then called a poke or side gown, of party-coloured cloth, with sleeves of an extravagant length and width, which, hanging down from his arms, formed a pair of wings to his body: underneath might be discerned his cointese, or silken tunic, girt around him with a belt of broidered velvet, buckled with a golden clasp, and sustaining a long dagger, (the only weapon on his person); his legs were shielded by a pair of stout huseaus, or woollen boots, to which were also attached the gilt spurs declaring his knighthood; and his hood of black silk, furred with lambskin, bore two labels denoting his degree in the civil law. His age might be about sixty, and the paleness and delicacy of his features betokened ill health; but his eye emitted a keen expression, which showed that if the body was feeble, the spirit was vigorous and active. His servant wore a habergeon of mail, over which was a tabard or livery, embroidered with the arms of his Lord. His head, arms, and legs were unarmed; and his only offensive weapons were an anlace,

or short knife, in his girdle, and a long handled and long-headed weapon, called a guisarme, which hung from his wrist. Their horses were stout hacknies, and were handsomely furnished.

The knight had not long to wait before the gate was unbarred, and the constable made his appearance. His garments were of a deep blood colour, bearing before and behind the green cross of St. George, the distinguishing mark of mercenary companions. He was in the prime of manhood, and his hard and acute phisiognomy bespoke a life of trial and adventure. His mien was erect, his air free and careless, and he addressed the stranger with a kind of familiar courtesy.

“By St. George and our lady of Malpas, Sir Knight! that rascal of a warder has done ye wrong by holding ye to our custom. — The silly knave imagined, be-like, ye were come to storm our castle.” — “Master Constable! Master Constable!” answered the knight smiling, “if your warder is a droll, I see the castellan is no monk of strict discipline. — By my

head, I believe it would take a thousand men at arms, and a host of cross bows, beside a leader of bolder mettle than I am made of, to capture your fortility."

The constable laughed, and cried "Sir knight! I have seen few chevaliers of a more gallant personage, — you wrong your knighthood by your want of assurance, — I have seen some chivalry in my time, and by the cross on my breast, I hold ye a model."

"If I were to return your compliment, Master Constable!" cried the stranger seriously, "I fear I should rouse your anger."

"By my faith, no," said the red squire, "for I am inclined to believe as well of myself, as any wight can think of me."

"You are a Gascon?" said the stranger.

"Yes, sir knight," answered he, "and as good a lance as ever ran tilt among the French chivalry."

"I do not doubt ye," said the knight.

"Whosoever does," cried the constable, "shall have my glove. — Here am I, Jannequin Fierabras, commonly called Le Rouge Escuyer, and constable of

Malpas, ready to prove, either on horseback or afoot, with lance, sword, battle-axe, or other weapon, my skill in arms, body for body, against all comers."

"You speak boldly, Master Constable," said the stranger, "and yet I know one young knight that would unhorse ye in the first course,"

"Bring your champion hither," cried Jannequin, "and I'll bear him through the barriers on the point of my lance."

"You do well, in truth, to bandy words with an old man ;" answered the knight ; "but although my champion hath not nineteen summers, he would, in a trice, bring your vaunting to the sand which strews these barriers."

"I hold him cheap," cried the constable, "your chivalry of England have neither grace nor skill."

"Ha ! by St. George thou presumest, Gascon," replied the knight fiercely ; "the chivalry of England have more true courage than that of France, or any other nation."

"By St. Denis, I cry no," said Jannequin ; "the best knight of England is a

bungler, matched with the lowest squire of France: — but thou seekest the abbot, he hath done me many a free turn, and I hold his friends reverently.”

“ I am his brother,” said the stranger.

“ I cry ye mercy, sir knight!” said the constable; “ the abbot Ingulphus hath bestowed on me many a golden franc, and hath never asked me for church-scot, or pardoner’s fee, though many’s the wild deed I have done in this country.”

The knight smiled, but shook his head, and passed onward; the constable followed, and endeavoured to appease him, by showing him the way to the abbey. When they had arrived at the porch, the stranger said, “ Master Constable, you may now return to the castle, and greet your lord in the name of Sir Paschal Marcel; tell him I am here with my brother, the abbot, and that we will see him forthwith.”

“ I will cheerfully obey you, sir knight,” replied Jannequin. “ Here’s for thy service,” said Sir Paschal, drawing

his bourse (or, as we now call it, purse,) and giving him a gold besantine; "men at arms love good living, and this will get thee a few stoups of Gascony wine."

"Gramercy for your favour, sir knight," said the red squire, and retired towards the castle.

Sir Paschal rang the bell of the monastery, and the ostiary instantly made his appearance. On explaining his relationship to the abbot, he was conducted by one of the acholytes to the locutorium or parlour, where he was speedily joined by his brother. They embraced each other with great affection; for although they had been in the habit of constant correspondence, they had not personally met for several years. After they had made all necessary enquiries upon family subjects, the abbot gave orders for the stickler (that is to say, wood-cutter) of the abbey, to make a large fire on the iron dogs which stood in the hostillaria, (the apartment allotted in monasteries for the reception of guests,) and that the hostiller should prepare the room for Sir Paschal's occupation. All the officers of

the abbey were put in request: the master of the ambry, the cellarer, the refectiōner, the cura monasterii, the chamberer, and others were set upon different tasks, and in a short time the knight was as comfortably situated as if he had been at his own mansion in Southwark. The brothers conferred until their pietanciæ or pittances were served up: they then adjourned from the locutorium to the hostillaria, which was furnished for dinner.

The guest-room in the abbey of Malpas was large and airy, with two windows in the Saxon style of architecture, opening into the garden of the cloisters. At the upper end of the room, a few yards from the fire-dogs, was the dagus or dais, the upper table, at which the abbot, guests of rank, and the superior monks took their dinner, apart from the other members of the convent. The dais had its name from a cloth so called, with which the tables of kings were usually covered. The entire floor of the room was strewn with fresh rushes, and from the ceiling depended a brazen

candelabrum, branched into many sconces, and then termed arbor Jesse, or stirps Jesse, from its similitude to the branch or genealogical tree of Jesse. It had been introduced into England by Hugh de Flory, abbot of St. Austin's in Canterbury, about the year 1100, and was at first only used in churches and choirs, for the purpose of spreading the light to all parts, but had been since adopted by the monks for increasing the ornament and comfort of their own habitations. It may, perhaps, be necessary to inform our general readers of the nature and properties of the pittances, so called in monkish epicurism. *Pietanciæ*, then, were the over-commons on particular days among the religious, as distinguished from the *generale*, — single commons, or ordinary provision; and the arrival of the abbot's brother at the monastery was considered an *epocha* sufficiently momentous to take their meals out of the accustomed rule. These over-commons were also called *miseri-cordiæ*, and have incurred the just indignation of the historian, Matthew Paris.

In addition to the misericordiæ, the good monks were this day allowed their caritas or grace cup, which usually accompanied the sufferance of over-commons, and which they drew from the wastel or wassail bowl, which occupied the upper end of the table, and whence the abbot began the wass-heal or poculum charitatis to his brother. They also partook of the wastel-bread, consisting of fine white cakes sopped in the bowl, a favour seldom granted to the confrairie, except on days of peculiar solemnity. The abbot still retained much of the Knight Templar ; and, as a soldier, was unwilling to enjoy himself whilst his brethren were stinted to their ordinary diet. The monks were disciplinarians in the church ; but in the hostillaria, and at table, they were jolly fellows : many of them were men of good abilities, who, crossed by misfortune, or disappointed in views of ambition, had sought a refuge from further mishap within the walls of the cloister. It is scarcely to be supposed that the latter had divested themselves of their ambitious dreams, while the rich

office, the power, the mitre, ring, and crosier of their titled abbots floated before them ; but the present abbot, Ingulphus, was so much in favour with his brethren, that each, (saving his own interest,) would have prayed heartily for his superior's long existence. After some general conversation, the knight asked his brother if they had any prisoner in sanctuary.

“ By my faith, no !” answered Ingulphus ; “ but it is rumoured we shall have Roger Taillebois, who hath slain a forest verderor.”

“ How happened the affray ?” cried the knight.

“ That I know not ;” returned the abbot ; “ but brother Daniel, our prolocutor, who hath examined our granger, will inform you ; the granger is germain to the slain verderor — brother ! relate.”

“ Cheerfully,” replied Daniel : “ the granger hath vowed by the virgin he will have revenge for his kinsman's blood.”

“ That is unchristian,” said a devout brother.

“Not a whit!” cried the abbot, as the intrepid spirit of the Templar shot into his veins, “not a whit! I should count him no man of mettle, were he to sit down with the wrong.”

“Ay, holy father,” replied the brother, “but remember, Dieu son act: it is the will of God; — *et eripere telum, non dare irato decet.*”

“Proceed, Daniel,” said the abbot, not wishing to be further schooled; “proceed with thy narration.”

“Thus it is,” said Daniel; “Evan Fitzwarren, a retainer of Sir Roger Taillebois, was taken by the foresters of Threap in stable stand, with his long bow bent against the earl’s * deer, his hands bloody, and his dogs drawing after the slot.” “What, in the civil law,” interrupted Sir Paschal, “we call *furtum manifestum*; that is, *ubi latro deprehensus est, seisisus de aliquo latrocinio*, — an unequivocal and unconcealable robbery.”

* The earl of Chester had regal privileges in his palatinate. Leicester’s Antiq. folio 164. Cowel, edit. 1727.

The monk bowed his assent to the civil lawyer, and proceeded: "Evan was taken before the regarder, and by him presented; for many a fat buck has that yeoman's bow brought to the greensward. — The verderor received his attachment, and punished the malefactor with the loss of his ears and nose, besides setting on him a fine of twenty marks.

"Saint Thomas à Becket!" cried the abbot; "that was deadly judgment for slaying a few deer."

"Ay, by our lady was it," added Sir Paschal; "but remember, brother Ingulphus, *quod multis placet, magno periculo custoditur* — were the laws not penal and strict in this particular, the king and earl shortly would not have a deer in their forests — But proceed sir monk, I would not interrupt ye."

"The yeoman," continued brother Daniel, "returned to his lord, bearing upon his visage the bloody marks of his punishment; and Sir Roger, on beholding his condition, wished the deer's horns in the belly of the king, for enacting the accursed forest laws, as he termed them,

and swore he would have an ample revenge."

"Did he so, by St. Cyprian?" cried the abbot.

"By St. Cyprian he did," answered Daniel; "and it was not long before he redeemed his oath."

"As how, good brother?" said Ingulphus.

"You shall hear," replied the monk. "On the following morning he mounted his horse, and, with a company of men at arms, rode to Bangor on the Dee, within the purlieu of the forest, where the verderor sat still holding his assize."

"Well!" cried the abbot "what said the verderor, Hubert de Hautbois? He is a stout man of his hands, and hath a few foresters and yeomen at his back."

"Sir Roger," said Daniel, "surrounded the court-house, and entered the hall, with his men at arms, before Hubert might prepare himself. He reproached the verderor with the punishment of his vassal, and Hautbois excused himself *virtute officii*.—Hot words soon rose between them, and, in the end, the

verderor fell under the Lord Roger's dagger. He then withdrew, and rode leisurely home again."

"He will be out of the law by this act," said the abbot; "or, as the country people say, a friendless man."

"Ay, by my head," cried Sir Paschal, and as that writer on English law, Bracton, saith, *si quis talem scienter paverit, receptaverit, vel scienter communicaverit aliquo modo, vel occulta-verit*; he shall be punished at the King's pleasure; so, within your county, he must abide the earl's doom.

"By my faith, brother Paschal," answered the abbot, "Taillebois cares little for either earl or law. — He hath an embattled house, and 100 men at arms to guard it; so that he holds not the earl's power at a rush's worth."

"Hath he not a daughter?" said the knight.

"Yes, a right fair one," returned Ingulphus; "Blanche Taillebois hath not her peer in Christendom. — She will be a good match, for her father has many a fair manor, beside his barony of Harding."

“Hath she a suitor?” enquired the knight.

“It is said du Chatelet hath lately tendered himself to Sir Roger,” replied the abbot, “and that he hath been accepted. — The lands of Harding and Malpas lie close together, and would make a wide barony if united. — But, brethren, we have sat too long. — God pardon us the sin.” — The monks arose from table, and each friar bowing to his superior and his brother, with hands folded on his breast, withdrew to his cell.

The abbot then rang that small bell called schilla, which instantly summoned the chamberer to his presence. With his assistance, Ingulphus assumed his exterior garment, and the caparo, or hood, commonly worn by churchmen of rank beyond the walls of their cloisters.

His brother also put on his poke, and, leaving the abbey, they walked towards the castle of du Chatelet.

The draw-bridge being down, they entered without difficulty, and, passing

the court yard, began to ascend a flight of steps leading to the great hall. A loud uproar, intermingled with laughter, singing, minstrelsy, and the rattling of arms, assured the brothers that the inmates were enjoying their evening carousal. When they arrived upon the lintel or threshold of the hall, the scene came fairly before their eyes. About 300 persons, some armed, others partly so, but the greater number unarmed, sat or reclined upon long benches surrounding several oaken tables, upon which were fixed many large flaggons of wine and ale, with horn drinking cups. At the upper end, in an immense chimney nook, were the fire-dogs, upon which an enormous fire of wood sent forth an astonishing heat, and a light which took away all necessity for torch or candle. Le rouge escuyer sat at the head of the first table, accompanied by the men at arms ; whilst the domestics, archers, and varlets, occupied the others : the minstrel attached to the household, sat in his blue robe and gilt chain, to the right of the Gascon, and

was now tuning his harp to a merry roundelay, well known among the red crosses. Armour and arms of all kinds were hung up against the walls. Hauberts, haubergeons, corselets, gambesons, gardebraches, pectorels, jambeaux, cuissarts, greves, chapelles de fer, salets, bassenets, shields, targets, together with guisarmes, halberts, bills, pikes, and lances, swords, battle-axes, maces, and, indeed, all the armoury of active and defensive warfare. Over the fire place was the Baron du Chatelet's banner, (three castles on a field azure,) and beneath it the polished tabards of his marshal and body squires, emblazoned with the same arms. Large stag-hounds lay before the fire, undisturbed by the noise and revelry; whilst several spar-hawks, and a beautiful pilgrim falcon, which had chosen their mews on the rafters of the hall, were equally docile or indifferent. The abbot laid his hand upon his brother's arm to restrain him from entering: the lay of the minstrel had caught his ear, and he hung with earnestness upon the voice and harp, as they concluded the last stanza of the roundelay. He had heard it in Palestine,

and on the shores of the Bosphorus, and the remembrance clang to him like the image of a friend long dead, but never forgotten. The rush of ancient reminiscences brought the blood into his face, and his eye glistened with a tear-drop as they entered the hall.

The clamour instantly ceased, and Jannequin stood up and welcomed them to the castle. The minstrel rose from his seat, and struck a chord and a verse, improviso, in the praise of the lord abbot and the knight his brother. Each of them rewarded him handsomely. Ingulphus, acting upon his late feelings, drew a gold ring set with a rich stone from his finger, and put it into the hand of the bard, whilst Sir Paschal presented him with five golden francs.

“God reward your princely munificence,” cried the minstrel; “I shall declare your bounty whilst I can strike harp in hall.”

One of the household then conducted the abbot and his brother to the oriel chamber of the baron, but we shall detain our readers a short time in the hall, in

order to witness the carousal of the olden time. No sooner had Ingulphus and Sir Paschal withdrawn, than Jannequin cried out, "Ho! Sir Minstrel; here's to thy mistress; may she be as chaste as St. Ursula, and as fair as the princess Eglantine."

"She is both, Sir Constable," replied the harper, who was a young man of an elegant appearance; "woman chaster never lived, and woman fairer," he continued in an ecstasy, "never can live."

"Think ye she is worthy," cried le rouge escuyer, "that Jannequin Fierabras should splinter a lance for her beauty?"

The men at arms roared with laughter at this gasconade, and one of them named Guisbert Hay replied, "By my faith, Jannequin, if she is not, I hold her but blowsy faced, as they say in Kent."

"Ha! by St. Roche à Bearn," cried the constable, "I hold myself fit to do battle for a queen."

"Are you then of gentle blood?" said the minstrel,

“ Ay, by St. Dennis,” replied Fierabras, “ though I never yet bore pennon in field.”

“ And what are your arms ?” said the harper.

“ My arms, Sir Minstrel ! my arms are, egad they are from my name Fierabras, a dexter hand, armed, bearing a sword gules, on a field or.

“ And your cry of war ?”

“ Ha ! Monseigneur St. Dennis !” shouted the Gascon, “ it is, — it is — it is —”

“ The devil for Fierabras,” cried Guisebert, and the hall re-echoed at the expense of the red squire.

“ Guisebert,” cried he, “ I shall hold thee accountable for this insolence when time serves.”

This threat increased the mirth of Guisebert and his companions, who no longer attempted to put any restraint on their laughter, so that the Gascon was obliged to give way to the torrent. At length the minstrel put a stop to the uproar by striking a few chords, and the men at arms were instantly silent in expectation of what was to follow. The

harper ran over the roundelay he was about to sing, and the silver tones of his harp soothed the jarring spirits of the soldiers into peace and unanimity. The constable filled a goblet with wine and handed it to the minstrel, saying, "Here, Sir Minstrel, a cup of Gascony wine will make your voice as soft as a Lombard's."

The minstrel drained the cup and returned it to the squire. He then sang the following song, with a voice highly melodious, and, for that age of simplicity in the art of singing, with a judgment tolerably cultivated.

Sweet bugle! blow thy melody,
And banners glance in rivalry,
From English strand to Holy Land,
Goes forth our gallant chivalry,

Gay gallies deck'd with broidery,
Fair 'scutcheons, gold, and blazonry,
Do softly ride upon the tide,
Awaiting England's hauthonry.

And there is heard sweet minstrelsy,
From mandolin and psaltery,
Viol and harp sound sweet and sharp,
And waken notes of ecstasy.

Forsake their ease and revelry,
Bold baron, knight, and escuyer,
Each dons his harness, cries to arms,
And mounts his foaming destrier.

Yell, forest beasts ! scream, birds of prey !
Yell out for very gratitude ;
The murth'rous hound will now be bound,
The falcon eke will wear his hood.

Wail, lovely ladies, weep and wail
Cry out for very solitude !
England hath lost a gallant host,
By brave and noble hardihood.

And now against the Saracen,
Advances the bold company,
With rested lance they onward prance,
To charge the false Moslemerie.

Like thunder bursts the dread *melée*,
Pells forth the shouted *enseignyie**,
Lance, helm, and shield, bestrew the field.
And hundreds of our chivalry.

But where each Christian's corse is laid,
Around, a heap of paganry,
A bloody band struck by his hand,
Do form his gory sepulchre.

* Slughorn or *cri de guerre*.

And now the shout of victory,
Peals onward through Heaven's canopy ;
The mad'ning strain, peals on amain,
Saint George ! upon the foemanrie !

Fly, Moslem, fly, the field is won,
Death leads the croissed chivalry,
Your black Mahound hath kiss'd the ground,
His star has set in drouperie.

Blow, bugle, blow thy melody,
And banners glance in rivalry,
From Holy Land to England's strand,
Returns our conqu'ring chivalry.

The minstrel concluded amid the
plaudits of his companions. Guisebert
exclaimed, " By the rood of Hastings,
better minstrelsy than thine, Sir Harper,
heard I never since I bore arms ; it is
powerful enough to make a man take
the cross, would he or no."

" And if any man would flee in the
hour of battle," cried another man at
arms, " having heard thine harping, he
deserves to have his hauberk drawn over
his ears."

" Ye should hear Colibert of Langue-
doc," said the Gascon ; " he is a trou-

badour, and knoweth to fight as well as to sing ; he is not to be matched either with harp or lance."

" A pize on Colibert of Languedoc," replied Guisebert ; " I will wager my courser against a foundered rouncey * that I find his master at both, without stirring from this hall."

The red squire answered with a scornful sneer.

" By our lady, Jannequin !" cried Guisebert, " this is the way with you French — there is nothing great, noble, or valorous, save in France — that is the only country, with you, for princely nobility, gallant knights, and handsome ladies."

" And if I had sworn it," said Jannequin, " I had still been a true man."

" Say ye then there is no knight of England," cried Guisebert, " who can match the chivalry of France ?"

" Not one, by St. Denis," returned the constable.

" By St. Edward, Constable ! thou art

* A sorry horse.

mistaken ;” cried Hay, “ for there is many a knight of English blood, and our master, Bertrand du Chatelet, among the rest, that would never need to run two courses against the best men ye have ; and sooner than they should fail, I would gage my own glove against the pride of your chivalry.”

“ If you throw down your glove against France, here,” cried Jannequin, reddening with anger, “ you shall not take it up again for lack of answer — I live in your England now, but I am a Gascon still.”

“ Ay, that are you !” replied Guisebert, “ no man here doubts it — and I trow it is Gascon honour to place other knights before your liege lord.”

“ Do’st thou doubt mine honour, Guisebert Hay ?” cried the constable fiercely.

“ I pray ye peace, worthy sirs !” said the minstrel, “ I did my best for your entertainment ; and had no thought of stirring up a broil by any mention of my desert. I would give my chain and pal-

frey, so that ye would leave this quarrel."

"Thou shalt not need, Sir Minstrel," said Guisebert, "for our strife is over; but prithee, constable! what made thee quit France, since thou likest it so well."

"Because all men were not of my mind," answered Jannequin, "I was for living in common, whilst those who had fair lands, and plenty of gear, would not lend a franc's worth to my necessities. — Want produces invention, and I had soon a strong hold, with five and twenty men at arms under the free banner of St. George; — we pillaged the country for a year and a half, just as we do here, in a larger way, on the Border."

"That was a fine life," cried Guisebert.

"True, if it had lasted," answered Fierabras; "but the king one day got to hear of our pranks, and sent the constable with five hundred men at arms, and two thousand cross-bows, to besiege our fortress. — You may swear we did not stay to receive them; but dividing our spoil, each of us provided for him-

self; — I came to England, and my companions went to the devil for what I know. — However, the falcon knows his eyrie, and I shall wing home again when my time comes.”

“What! now thou hast got enough of English gold to buy thee a French barony,” said Guisebert, “thou would’st quit our service, and set up thy dexter hand with the cross sword on a banner of thine own. — Thou wilt make a worthy addition to the French chivalry.”

The Gascon turned pale with rage at this sarcasm. “Guisebert! my man,” cried he, “beware! I wear not my basillard for fashion. — Thou may’st play a point too strong, and I warn thee in time.”

“Good Sirs!” said the minstrel, “disturb not our harmony with this jarring. — Sir Guisebert! do not enrage the gallant squire.”

The man at arms laughed, and replied, “Not I; though I care not a breath for his basillard, nor all the weapons he is master of. — But come, Sir Minstrel!

strike up — thy soft notes are better peace-makers than even the lord abbot.”

“Willingly,” replied the harper; and he instantly began a brisk madrigal, or country song, which soon drove away all thoughts but those of pleasure and enjoyment.

CHAP. III.

I am no knight-errant to seek adventures
For the mere bubble of a splendid name.
Give me my guerdon, — hard, unyielding gold,
Something to touch and handle for my service :
No visionary payment will I have
That slips the fingers ere it be well grasp'd.

The Lombard.

OUR readers will now attend the abbot and Sir Paschal to the chamber of the Baron du Chatelet. The henchman, who had led them from the hall, advanced up a broad stair, with a torch in his hand, and opened a pair of highly carved oaken folding doors, which admitted them to the apartment. This was the oriolum or oriel chamber. The name, which became general for a private cabinet, was borrowed from the oriel cloister of a monastery. It was a small room, but perhaps the best furnished in the castle: the walls were wainscotted with slabs of carved oak finely polished, and adorned, in many

places, with the arms of the baron emblazoned on banners of white sarcenet. A few portraits of starched dames and fierce warriors, for that age indifferently painted, filled up some of the compartments of the wainscotting; and at one end of the room, in a recess, latticed off by a Gothic railing, was the oratory, raised above the level of the chamber, by an ascensorium of three steps. It contained a rood of pure gold, with two large golden sconces, each holding a lighted wax taper, exalted on a lecturnium or reading desk, which was covered with a pall of eastern tapestry, and at the foot of the lecturnium were placed several bancalia, or cushions for the use of the penitent; a veil of red silk usually hung before the oratory as a screen, but it was now withdrawn. Near the chimney was a raised couch, surmounted with a canopy of red silk, adorned as the banners, with the arms of Sir Bertrand; and on that part of the floor which was raised, both in the oratory and the dais, a pedale or foot cloth had been laid down for greater state. The windows of the chamber

were illuminated with divers figures painted in gold and colours, intended to represent the exploits of some ancestors of du Chatelet, who had engaged in the holy wars. In the midst of the chamber was a round, heavy table covered with chequered tapestry, upon which were several silver comfit boxes, filled with spices, and cans of gold containing rich wines. Several chairs, of a substantial construction, stood in different parts of the room ; in the corners were hunting spears, whiniards, and daggers of the chase ; and a beautiful hound, called a berselet, lay before the fire. We have given a particular description of this chamber, in order that those of our readers who are less informed, may observe the state and magnificence, in which the ancient nobility of this country enjoyed themselves ; and we shall now proceed to delineate the person and dress of the baron himself. As the abbot and Sir Paschal entered the chamber, he stood with his back to the fire, and appeared a stout and well made man, nearly six feet in height : his age might be thirty ;

his visage dark, and his black hair was turned up into what were then called croks, large bunches of curls. His eyes were also black ; but when he was more than usually warm, they emitted a sort of fiery scintillation, which cast a glare over his sallow countenance. His features were not uncomely ; but they disclosed a spirit, fierce, turbulent, and cruel ; and were of themselves a sufficient warning to a foe of open violence or secret treachery. He wore a tunic reaching to his knees of a fine cloth called celestrine, (sky colour), the edges of which were adorned with broders of gold, and a rich fur called lucerne, mailed red and brown, and mingled with black spots : his hose, closely fitted to his shape, were of the same stuff, and laced, as his tunic, with golden embroidery ; and his poleins or peaked boots were fastened to his knees by chains of silver : in his girdle he wore a basillard* of capital workmanship ; and his single sword lay on the table before him, with

* A large poignard.

his mantle of crimson damask embroidered with castles of gold. He advanced to meet Ingulphus and his brother as they entered the room, and cried out in a tone of perfect familiarity, "By my faith, Lord Abbot, you have a mind to exercise my Christian patience; I have waited for ye these two hours, with no companion save the flaggons on the table, and this gay berselet; — and you, Sir Paschal! treat ye all friends as ye do me? I thought to have seen ye at the heels of my constable."

Ingulphus made the apology of both, by informing the baron he had been engaged in business of a private nature with his brother, which had occasioned the delay; "and beside," continued he, "Paschal needed both bite and sup after his morning ride."

"And think ye," cried du Chatelet, "we could not have purveyed for him; he should have had the best buck in Threap forest, tho' I had slain another verderor in the purchase; and I have as good wine in the vaults of this fortress

as the Pope at Avignon : but sit, Lord Abbot ! sit, Sir Knight ! what ho, knave !”

He stamped several times on the floor, and his henchman appeared at the door.

“ Give us a light, and have some fuel to this fire ; and hark, knave ! bid the botiler bring more wine and cups : tell Sir Whitespurs, the constable, to keep his beavy in better order, the house rings with their revelry.”

The henchman disappeared, but presently returned with the dapifer, or house steward, attended by the botiler, and several huscarles or inferior servants. One bore the flaggons of wine, another the bactiles or candlesticks, a third faggots of wood to replenish the fire ; a fourth the wine cups, which were of polished horn tipped with silver or gold ; and a fifth with an augmentation to the spice box : the dapifer and botiler bore nothing ; but with great ceremony marshalled the servants into the chamber, and, when they had performed their offices, marshalled them out again. When they had withdrawn, the baron pressed

his guests to partake of his wines and spices, which, like polite gentlemen, they did not refuse.

“ Your claretum,” said Sir Paschal, “ is admirable ; the red wines of France are weak and without body, but this is sound, mellow, and of extraordinary strength.”

“ And your galrigaches is equally good,” cried the abbot, “ I could drink it with *gusto in articulo mortis* : but I have not to praise either for the first time : I am *inter amicos*.”

They continued for some time to praise and swallow the claretum and galrigaches ; but as their good fellowship would perhaps form an uninteresting feature of our history, we shall pass it by, and fall to something more serious.

Ingulphus was the first to interrupt their enjoyment, and said “ but a truce, Sir Knights, to your debauch : it is now time to enter upon the important part of our visit.”

“ Ay, by St. Winifred,” continued Sir Paschal, “ it befits us not to sit was-sailing here, when we have matters of

urgency to debate upon ; we have already communicated with you, Sir Bertrand, by letter, on the subject which my lord Mortimer is engaged in."

" Speak out, Sir Knight !" cried du Chatelet ; " your brother, the Lord Abbot Ingulphus, has used all his power, by persuasion and offers of service, to shake my allegiance : ye would wish me to abandon the king, and join the rebel standard under the queen and Mortimer ; what need of ceremony ? Is it not so ?"

" The facts are such," answered the abbot, " but my brother would couch the sense in language less objectionable."

" Pish !" ejaculated the baron, " why need ye to go out of your way to seek far fetched terms, when plain language will serve the turn ? I am master in my own castle, and care not, though the king and his minion Gloucester heard each word I utter."

" You are a soldier, Sir Baron," replied Sir Paschal, " whilst I, who am but a doctor of civil law, love best the *vim temperatam*."

" I understand ye not," cried du Cha-

telet, "but did I miss the mark? Do ye not now seek the marcher du Chatelet, to win him over to your party?"

"Ay, by our lady of Malpas," cried the abbot, "we have no other business."

"It is at the desire of the Lord Mortimer," said Sir Pascal, "who holds you in much favour, that I have ridden thus far north to see you."

"When heard ye from Sir Roger?" cried the baron.

"I had sealed letters from him," replied the lawyer, "brought by a trusty hand, on the eve of my quitting London."

"Well, Sir Knight," said du Chatelet hastily, "what offers doth he make for my alliance?"

"Offers! Sir Bertrand!" replied the civilian.

"Ay, offers, Sir Knight!" continued the marcher; "pledges and troth, that he will make recompense for my services: think ye I will be made his tool for the very honour? Much honour it is by my holy faith!"

“ It is surely no stain to be sworn brother to a Mortimer,” said the abbot.

“ Stain or glory,” cried the baron, “ I’ll none on’t, save I win by the bargain — What ! do I not peril life, limb, and land by this rebellion, and am I not to reap where I have sown ? No, if the honour of the alliance is all that may be won, let those knights that love adventures seek it ; but no man of mine shall clap harness to his back, or put lance in rest on such a bootless errand.”

“ You travel too fast, Sir Bertrand,” answered the lawyer, “ I did not say that your services would go unrewarded, for whoever aids the queen and prince in this enterprize will assuredly gain more than they can expect.”

“ I will not seal covenant,” cried the marcher scornfully, “ on any such idle expectation ; I will have it down in black and white, sealed and sworn to as a treaty ought to be : we are no Borrel churls, nor is our compact on a rood of land ; we are on an adventure where the lives of gallant men are perilled, and

I will have no starting when the storm is over."

"What would ye, Sir Knight?" cried Ingulphus.

"Look ye, my Lord Abbot, and you Sir Doctor," cried the baron forcibly, "were I to live in peace, and on the produce of my land, I should be little better than a vavasor.* The situation of my fortress, and the bad spirit of the Welsh, have made it necessary that I should hold a large retinue of men at arms in my pay. Than these gallants there are not better in their profession, nor men more to be relied on, for good deeds in the day of peril, as you, holy father, can witness.

"By St. Paul," cried the abbot, "I have seen them do many a fair deed. They are right valiant men at arms."

"There is a handsome district," continued Sir Bertrand, "on the other side of the Border, and adjoining the demesnes

* A title in dignity next to a baron. Camd. Brit. 109.

of Mortimer, which I would fain add to my barony of Malpas. St. George to my aid ! I might in time conquer the whole western March. — This is worth fighting for, and if you, Sir Doctor and my Lord Abbot, will enter into covenant for its surety to me and my heirs, in the event of my driving out the present Welsh lord, I will to-morrow hoist the cross of St. George on my fortress, and declare for the queen.”

The brothers looked at each other, but hesitated to speak. The baron continued. “ On no other condition will I advance my banner, and ye may now know whether I am to be your feal friend, or remain the liegeman of Plantagenet. But mark ye, sirs, if ye refuse me, I throw my whole weight into your adversary’s scale. My friends are not few : Taillebois of Harding is like to become my near kinsman, and the king will gratify those who stand firm to him in his need.”

“ I am not commissioned,” said Sir Paschal, to go so far ; neither am I sure,

were I to assent to your terms, that Sir Roger would ratify the compact."

"That is your business, Sir Doctor," said the baron smiling, "but Sir Roger shall not order my banner, nor any man under fear of it, unless he do."

"Are you under contract, Sir Knight," said the abbot, "with Blanche Taillebois?"

"With her father I am," answered the baron. "She is mine or I win 5000 gold francs. The girl is comely and fit for a baron's lady love; but if she were not, she is heir to a fair barony, rich enough to supply a thousand deficiencies."

"And should we seal a covenant with you," continued Ingulphus, "and take upon ourselves the responsibility of its perfection, will you swear by your knighthood that Taillebois shall join our faction?"

"I swear by my knighthood, Lord Abbot," replied the baron, "that no endeavour on my part shall be wanting to his conversion."

“Nay, Sir Baron,” said the abbot, “now you fly off. If we engage to obtain you a grant of the Welsh barony, which, with your own of Malpas and Taillebois, of Harding, might well form a good earldom, you must give us your faith and troth, that your intended kinsman shall join us, and in force, like a true knight.”

“This will be but *quid pro quo*,” continued the Civilian.

The baron mused, and took several strides over the chamber. He then said,

“But if the match be broken off, and not by my means?”

“Why then you shall stand excused,” replied Ingulphus, “for you will suffer in losing Harding.”

“And what force would ye I should retain?” said the marcher.

“At least three hundred men at arms,” replied the abbot, “and six hundred archers. — Less would not serve ye on your Welsh expedition; but as many more, Sir Baron, as ye list.”

“I will bear, or send ye my resolution on the morrow,” said du Chatelet, “Taille-

bois will be here early, and if he will gage his faith to second me, I will be stirring with a handsome force when the foe shall least expect me. My men at arms are ready for mounting, and I will give orders to my vadelect * to have my own arms ready for a present adventure."

"Then peace be with you, Sir Baron," cried the abbot, "we will await your decision."

"But you have forgot to tell me the news," cried du Chatelet, "when will the queen arrive?"

"The queen and prince," replied Sir Paschal, attended by Sir Roger Mortimer, Sir John of Hainault, and a large force of men at arms, will sail for England in a few days' space. The news of their arrival will be brought here direct by our kinsman, young Aubrey Marcel."

"By St. George," cried the baron, "I am right glad to hear it; for whether I am with your faction or against it, there will be deeds of chivalry well performed in this gallant enterprize. Ho, knave!"

* A gentleman servitor. Selden's Tit. of Honour.

(continued he, stamping on the floor, at which signal his henchman appeared) "lights for the Lord Abbot."

The henchman expanded the folding doors, and Ingulphus and his brother withdrew, being lighted down the staircase by half a dozen huscarles, who stood holding torches, like so many statues, from the chamber door to the hall entrance. The carousal was now over: the soldiers had withdrawn to their repose, and nothing living was to be seen, but several stag hounds and bracelets, that were allowed to roam about undisturbed. They lay supine before the embers of the fire, and raised their heads, and gave a fierce growl, as the abbot and Sir Paschal passed through the hall. The flaggons and drinking cups were overthrown, and the tables swam with the shedden ale and wine. When they had passed the hall, they came to the court yard, which was deserted except by the warders. The bridge was up; but it was lowered for the spiritual father and his companion, who, passing over, entered the abbey.

Early on the morrow, the Baron du Chatelet's vadelet rang at the door of the monastery, and was admitted by the ostiary to the hostillaria, where the abbot and Sir Paschal sat at breakfast. He bore a message from his lord, desiring that Ingulphus and his brother would accompany him to Harding Castle on a visit to Sir Roger Taillebois, who had informed him he was obliged to keep house; the sheriff and the posse comitatus, being out to take him for his murder of Hubert de Hautbois.

“The baron is now horsing,” continued the page, “and will ride anon.”

Ingulphus and Sir Paschal consented to accompany him. The former called for his hood and round boots, and ordered four of the brethren to prepare to attend him. The civilian accoutred himself in his riding dress, and sent word, by an acholyte * to his retainer, to caparison their palfreys, and join the cavalcade in the court. When they were

* An inferior church servant. — Spelman.

ready to set out, the abbot, followed by his brother and the four monks, came to the porch of the abbey, and the former mounted his mule, an animal of exceeding beauty, with rich housings of purple and gold, and small silver bells to his bridle reins, which, as Chaucer says, jingled "eke as loud as doth the chapell belle." The monks were mounted on mules also, but of a more homely appearance. One of them acted as crociarius, and bore a large cross before his superior: another carried his cloca or riding mantle, which was of purple cloth, lined with the skin of the black-fox, the warmest of all furs; whilst the two last did nothing more than attend to the personal service of the holy father. Sir Paschal and his servant being seated on their palfreys, the cavalcade moved out of the abbey yard, and advanced beneath the portal of the fortress. They did not wait long before they were joined by the baron and his retinue, consisting of fifty men at arms. They were armed as for battle. Sir Bertrand wore complete mail, except his helmet and lance, which,

with his battle axe of Bourdeaux steel, were borne by his body squires. Over his armour he had a quartelois, similar to the tabards of his squires, with his arms embroidered on the back and breast ; he rode a black courser of the heavy Flanders breed, which, in addition to its being completely barbed, was covered with a superb housing of red cloth, decorated, in many places, with the arms of his rider, worked in gold. On his head du Chatelet wore an abacot, or cap of state, looped at one side with a jewelled button. A marshal bore his banner at the head of the company, which moved in slow and regular order, with their long lances pointed to Heaven, like a closely set wood.

Several veltrarers, or dog leaders, followed the cavalcade on foot, each man having a leash of greyhounds, braceletts, or couchers. The braconier, or huntsman, rode a fleet chaser, or horse of the field. A few falconers, and ostringers, with their hawks hooded on their fists, completed the procession ; all the sportsmen were clad in "the Lincoln Green,"

and many of them had long bows and bugles.

It was a gallant sight to see the free companions in their polished mail, ready to undertake any deed of arms, or hazardous adventure, with a right good will. They halted when they had passed the drawbridge, and du Chatelet saluted the abbot and Sir Paschal. He then formed his men at arms into two parties. One of them, headed by the marshal, led the vaward, followed by the baron on one side, Sir Paschal on the other, and the Lord Abbot with his attendant monks, in the middle; Sir Bertrand's body squires flanked the extremities, and the rear was brought up by the other division of men at arms, and the huntsmen and falconers. In this order they moved towards the gate of the town, which they passed, as well as the barriers, and proceeded at a regular pace, on the great Chester road toward Harding Castle. In a short time they came upon a vast unenclosed heath or moor, spotted with gorse bushes, fern, bushwood, and patches of trees, and intersected with a ditch or brook of

water. Here, at the desire of the abbot, who was a keen sportsman, the braconier let slip a few of his beagles and couchers. The dogs scattered over the heath, and soon drove several hares from their forms. The abbot set up the cry for chase, and the huntsmen slipped the leashes of their greyhounds, which followed the quest in great style, much to the satisfaction of the spiritual father. At this moment several herons, scared by the shouts of the hunters, rose from the brook, which Sir Bertrand observing, cried "Ho, knaves, cast off your falcons."

The falconers unhooded their birds, and slipped their jesses in an instant, and they mounted after the herons in a gallant flight. The whole company kept their eyes upon them.

"Ha! by St. Hubert," exclaimed the abbot, "that saur hawk is a gallant bird. So ho! So ho, boy! mark how he strikes down that coward heron!"

"Ha! now he wheels," cried Sir Bertram, "down goes another; and see

my little Tercelet, how gallantly he spars."

In a few minutes the falcons had stricken down all the birds which appeared, and were holding their flight onward, when the baron called out with great vociferation, " Hillio ! So ho, boys ! So ho ! Hillio ! Come, birds ! "

He was joined by the abbot, and all the falconers, who made a most deafening halloo. The falcons, however, knew the recall, and, returning with great velocity, alighted upon the lures, which were strapped to the falconer's arms, and suffered themselves to be jessed and hooded. The dogs had now been sufficiently breathed, and had caught several hares ; they began to scatter from the multiplicity of game, and the baron commanded the braconier to sound his horn. The huntsman, and his attendants who had bugles, instantly sounded, and the hounds came in from all sides, and were again leashed.

" Have ye had sport enough, lord abbot," said Sir Bertram, " or shall the knaves go forward with us ? "

“ No, by St. Paul,” answered Ingulphus, “ we will neither hawk nor hunt more to-day.”

“ Then ye may return, Sirs !” cried the baron. “ Ho ! Egerton, how hath my greyhound played her part ?”

“ She has more beauty than bottom, my Lord Baron !” replied the braconier. “ She would not run above a mile’s cast ; and threw the bracelets out, by my fay, half a score times.”

“ Hang her, or give her to thy wife, Egerton !” said Du Chatelet ; “ she is fit for nought, save a woman’s plaything.”

The sportsmen then drew off, and returned to Malpas, whilst the gentry and men at arms proceeded over the moor. As they advanced, the road became wilder and more sterile : the ground changed from moss and green-sward to loose sand and gravel, as if it had been on the sea-shore ; and to the right, rose from their path by a steep ascent, which formed the base of an immense pile of brown and hard rock, called Broxton hills. Neither tree, nor shrub, nor blade of vegetable matter grew upon their

rugged sides ; they seemed rather those rocks in the deserts of Asia and Africa, where the old anachoretæ lived upon stale bread and water, than any part of the noble county of Chester, in merry England. To the left of the road was the Welsh border, still fertile and beautiful, though ravaged and desolated ; and the Dee, which ran through the midst of the valley, and now flashed dazzling scintillations under the rays of the sun, added not a little to the beauty and magnificence of the scene. The castle of Harding stood on a hill side, its lower part being formed out of the hard rock : it had three embattled towers, which made the fortress triangular ; and in the midst stood the keep, or house of refuge ; the court-yard was a sort of platform on the top of the hill, and the portal was beneath that tower which fronted the road from Chester to Malpas.

It had neither ditch nor drawbridge, but a large portcullis, in addition to the gate, defended the entrance. The horse-path to the portal, which parted from the high way, was shelving and

declivitous, so that an enemy could not advance upon the castle without great caution ; and a large wood of oak, ash, beech, and fir, embowered the whole fortress. When the cavalcade had arrived within a short distance from that turn in the road which led to Harding, the abbot and his companions were surprised to hear the sound of clarions and trumpets, with the trampling and neighing of horses, and the ringing of arms ; but their admiration soon ceased, for advancing onward, they discovered the sheriff of Cheshire, (whom they knew by his banner) attended by twenty spears, and nearly a thousand bowmen and archers. They had beleaguered the castle, and would hear of nothing but the instant surrender of Sir Roger Taillebois, to stand trial for the homicide of Hubert the Verderor. As might have been expected, the baron was inflexible, and swore by St. Werburgh of Chester, he would never put himself into the hands of his enemies. The sheriff was on the point of commanding an assault,

when Sir Bertrand and his companions made their appearance.

The men at arms, in expectation of a rencontre, tightened their helmets, and laid their lances in the rests; whilst those spears attached to the sheriff did the like, and the archers and cross-bows drew up at the entrance of the wood.

But before any mischief could ensue, the sheriff sent a squire to Sir Bertrand du Chatelet, (whose arms he recognized, and whose renown made him dread an unfortunate issue in case of a combat,) to enquire the meaning of his coming thither in warlike array, and whether he intended to oppose himself to the laws of the country. Sir Bertrand replied that he had no such desire; that he had come on a visit to Sir Roger Taillebois, on a treaty of marriage with his daughter, and that, as a proof of his peaceful intention, he had in his company the Lord Abbot Ingulphus, and his brother, a learned civilian; that as a marcher he was entitled by law to the state he kept with him; and that he had never heard the sheriff was abroad with an armed

force. With this reply (which Du Chatelet had made, more out of a prudent desire not to commit himself by an attack upon the earl's officer, than any fear he had of the sheriff's company,) the squire returned to his commander, and upon the delivery of it, the sheriff rode from his party, and advanced to that of Du Chatelet.

Sir Bertrand, the abbot, and Sir Paschal saluted him, and Ingulphus, who was not desirous that he should become acquainted with the real motives of their visit to Sir Roger, willingly corroborated the statement of Du Chatelet. After some conversation, the sheriff, at the desire of the abbot, consented to accompany them, unattended, into the castle, and Sir Bertrand pledged himself that some arrangement, satisfactory to all parties, should be entered into by the Baron Taillebois. This convention was notified to Sir Roger, who immediately ordered the portcullis to be raised, and the gate thrown open. The spears and archers of the sheriff were left under the command of the constable of Chester

castle, with orders to remain on the spot until the return of their chief; but the men at arms of Sir Bertrand followed their leader into the fortress, casting looks of contempt upon the force of the shrievalty, as they passed their array.

CHAP. IV.

Hear me, Monimia, my dear only child !
Hear that on which thy father's fate doth hang !
Wilt thou be toward, merciful, relenting,
And save the life of him who gave thee being,
Or, by a stern and stubborn obduracy,
Draw on thy head my curses and my blood ?

The Bride of Marseilles.

THE abbot, Sir Bertrand, Sir Paschal, and the sheriff having dismounted in the court, Sir Roger Taillebois advanced to meet them. He was of low stature, but of a make peculiarly robust and muscular ; his age about fifty-five, and from his sandy hair, and fair complexion, he was usually denominated the Red Knight of Harding. His eyes were quick and fiery, and his changeable countenance, and quivering lip, showed that he had no command over his passions, which were, on some occasions, outrageously violent. He now wore a green surcoat, lined with

a fur called grey genet, girt around him with a hunters's belt, to which was attached his basillard. He received Sir Bertrand with open arms ; to the abbot he was submissively respectful ; and Sir Paschal acquired his favour by his affinity to the holy father ; but upon the sheriff he vented his rage and indignation.

“ Were it not,” cried he, “ that these honourable persons are pledged for thy safety, I would hang thee, Sir Sheriff, over my portal, as a warning to all those who dare to attempt my fortress. What seek you here, with your spears and archers ? “ I am the earl's officer,” replied the viscount “ sworn to execute the laws, and I come hither to attach you, Sir Baron, for the murder of Hubert de Hautbois, verderor of Threap forest.”

Taillebois grinned fiercely at the bold officer, and laid his hand on his basillard ; but Sir Paschal took him by the arm, and led him to a window, where they held a short conference. On returning, the civilian said, “ I am bid by my Lord Taillebois to inform you, Sir

Sheriff, that he denies the charge ; and that against any man, his peer, who dare affirm it, he throws down his glove. — If the accuser be of an inferior quality, Sir Roger defies him still, and will prove upon him, by his champion, that he is a liar and a recreant.”

“ This is well,” said the sheriff; “ and there is nothing more to do, than for the baron to surrender himself into my hands.”

“ I surrender into thy hands !” cried Taillebois; “ by the mother who bore me, I would sooner throw myself from the highest turret of my castle.”

“ Then I cannot accept your wager of battle ;” answered the sheriff; “ for by law you must be in close keeping, till you are delivered by the judgment of God.”

“ That will I never be,” cried Sir Roger, “ whilst I have a man to stand by me.”

“ He is certainly entitled to his dies concilii,” said the lawyer. “ Not in a criminal case,” replied the sheriff.

“ In all cases,” returned Sir Paschal :

“ Si quis a justitia regis implacitatus, ad consilium exierit.”

“ I pretend not to understand the law, cried the sheriff; “ but I know it is my duty to apprehend murtherers.”

“ How know ye, “ Sir Sheriff,” said du Chatelet, “ that Sir Roger is the murtherer ”

“ The whole country cries out upon him,” replied the viscount, “ from one end of the border to the other.”

“ But have you examined witnesses?” said Sir Paschal, “ or do you proceed upon hear-say ?”

“ There was no occasion to examine witnesses,” answered the sheriff, “ when the bloody deed is in every one’s mouth.”

“ The baron denies the accusation,” returned the civilian; “ and it appears to me, that by the common law he is entitled to his wager upon his own oath, se defendere unica manu.”

“ Sir Doctor!” replied the sheriff, “ you understand the civil law better than the common.—By Harry the First’s law, chapter twelfth, this crime is Ebere-

murder, and will not even admit of commutation."

"But this is a county palatine," cried the sophistical doctor, "and your earl holds ita libere per gladium, sicut ipse rex per coronam; ye have your own laws."

"They meddle not with the general laws of the kingdom," answered the sheriff; "the only difference is, that the baron hath contravened the dignity of the sword of Chester, instead of the king's peace."

"Argue as ye will," cried Taillebois; "though the law were as plain against me as the sheriff could make it, I would not surrender. — You have your answer, Sir Viscount, and may do your pleasure."

"I will do my duty," cried the sheriff, advancing to the baron, and laying his hand upon him. "I arrest thee, Roger Taillebois, for murder and felony; and I charge all present to aid and assist me in conveying him to prison."

This bold act so astonished Taillebois and his friends, that for some moments no one spoke. There had been one spectator of this singular scene, un-

known to the rest of the company. It was Blanche Taillebois. She had entered the room unobserved, and was chilled with terror, to hear that the earl's officer had come thither to arrest her father ; and more so, that her father was accused of murder ; for he had strictly forbidden his retainers, who were present when Hautbois fell under his dagger, to make any report within the precincts of Harding. Blanche leaned, breathless with alarm, on the back of a chair, where she had heard nearly the whole of the preceding discourse ; but when she saw the sheriff lay his hand upon the breast of her parent, her native courage was aroused by the insult, and before any one had time to interfere, she had sprung between them, and grasping the arm of the viscount, flung it off with an air of determined scorn.

The baron's eye glistened as he pressed her in his arms, whilst Du Chatelet, and his friends gazed at one another, and at the sheriff, with looks of astonishment. Blanche Taillebois was about seventeen years of age, and at King Edward's court,

which she had the last year visited, she had been held *la reine de beauté*. Like her father she was fair; but, with the softness usual in women of a light complexion, she possessed a great portion of dignity, and an uncommon animation of countenance. This might arise from her eyes, which, instead of being “orbs of rolling blue,” to match the style of her beauty, were a dark hazel, and shot glances of brilliant fire, which astonished and captivated the beholder; her hair was brown and voluptuously plentiful, and its dark shade well served to develop the regularity of her features: she was tall, slender, and graceful; but her figure was not strictly sylph-like: it possessed strength and activity, as well as elegance; and her whole air and carriage conveyed to the observer, a high notion of the energy and resolution of her character. She was clad in a tunic of green sendal, or silk of Cyprus, interwoven with threads of gold and silver wrought into flowers, gathered round the waist by an embroidered girdle, and fastened with a buckle of gold.

Over her tunic she wore a mantle of violet-coloured diaper, adorned with stars of silver, and lined with watchet (or sky blue) taffeta. Her stockings were of the same stuff, richly variegated with figures of gold; and her shoes or sotulares were of filigree work, laced with points of silver. Her luxuriant tresses, disposed in numerous small braids, were confined by a crestine or caul of silken net-work, enriched on the border with a row of large pearls; and she had a necklace, or rosary, of gold beads, with a crucifix of the same metal suspended on her bosom. Such was the person and figure of the youthful heroine who stood between her father and the law. Du Chatelet, who was desperately in love with her, (if his fierce passion was deserving of so tender an appellation) thought the best way of gaining her favour was by, at once, espousing the cause of her father, and taking upon himself his defence: he therefore said, "Hark ye, Sir Sheriff! before you consented to enter Harding with us, we promised to arrange this broil between

you and our kinsman ; but we had no thought of seeing you lay hands upon him in his own castle. By St. George, this insult cannot be borne ; and it behoves every true knight to espouse his cause. — You have nigh forfeited the benefit of our safe conduct.”

“ I have but done my duty,” replied the sheriff ; “ and ye are not liege men to your sovereign if ye withhold your assistance.”

“ By our Lady of Malpas, sheriff !” cried Du Chatelet, “ since thou art so bold, I tell thee, despite thine array, Sir Roger shall be safe and free — What, ho there ! Bonnelance !

One of his body squires attended his summons, and he continued, “ Mount for battle, and throw open the gate. — Bring my arms and courser.”

“ By St. Edith !” cried the sheriff, “ ye are traitors all.”

“ Ha ! traitors !” cried Du Chatelet ; “ by St. George, thou art rude, sheriff, and shalt be taught better.”

Sir Bertrand, who was all muscle, seized the viscount by the throat, and threw

him on his back, holding his dagger over him, but Blanche interfered.

“ Oh! for the Virgin’s sake,” cried Blanche, “ spare his life; let not his blood defile our walls. — Sir Bertrand! Father! my Lord Abbot! I conjure you by your holiness!”

The marcher relaxed his grasp, and sheathed his basillard, crying, “ Thank the maiden for thy life, sheriff; but for her prayer thy soul had now quitted thy body.”

“ Quit the house,” continued Taillebois, “ and withdraw thy rabble from my precincts, as ye value life.”

Du Chatelet’s squires now entered with his arms, and assisted him to lace his helmet, and buckle his shield on his breast. When these preparations were completed, he commanded them to conduct the sheriff out of the castle, and expel him from the gate: and continued—

“ If ye are not withdrawn by the time I can mount, and put spear in rest, I will have a charge against your array, for the honour of Lady Blanche.”

The squires led the sheriff away, and put him out at the gate. They then brought the courser of their lord to the hall door of the castle, where he came attended by Taillebois, the abbot, and Sir Paschal. Having mounted, he grasped his lance, and formed his men at arms : they put spurs to their horses, and galloped out of the gate, crying “ Malpas for Du Chatelet ;” but the sheriff and his array had entirely disappeared, without leaving a trace of their encampment. Sir Bertrand and his companions returned to the castle, and again dismounted : the marcher took off his helmet and shield, and gave them, with his lance, to his squires. The Baron Taillebois returned him many thanks for his service, and swore he would never abandon him when in like peril. They returned to the apartment where they had left Blanche ; but the damsel had retired. As it was now mid-day, Sir Roger ordered dinner to be served in the hall, where the Lady Blanche, the Lord Abbot, Sir Bertrand du Chatelet, Sir Paschal Marcel, the four brethren at-

tendant upon the abbot, and himself, sat down at a raised table, or dais, situated at the upper end of the hall. There was another, much larger, for the men at arms, and household domestics, where the castellan of Harding presided. Both tables were plentifully, if not elegantly provided : the dilligrout, or rich pottage, could only be equalled by the froyse, or frittered pancakes, mixed with collops of fat bacon, and the hasta porci, or shield of brawn, retained its accustomed consequence at the baron's board. There were also haunches of deer, not, perhaps, so tender as those cooked for the tables of this day's nobility, but, doubtless, somewhat more savoury : wines, ale, and metheglin were in great abundance, not any of which was spared by the men at arms. When the gentry had finished their meal, wines and spices were set upon their table, and Du Chatelet rose and offered the drageoir or comfit box to his fair mistress, who fancying it to be the mere effect of his gallantry, without scruple availed herself of his politeness, and partook of the spices ; in the

same manner he handed her wine, and showed, by the urgency of his attentions, that she had made an impression on his heart, which he did not seek to disguise. This discovery alarmed her, and she begged permission to retire. It was with difficulty granted, and she withdrew to her own chamber. After a short time spent in carousal, Sir Bertrand mentioned the business which had brought Sir Paschal from London ; and that knight, and the Abbot Ingulphus, with himself, to Harding, together with the offers which had been made him, and the part which he had engaged himself to play in the intended revolution :— he continued, “ I have already declared to my friends, that I am in treaty for Blanche, and that I hold your assent ; and if the marriage be concluded —”

“ Doubt it not,” interrupted Taillebois, “ I will it, and the thing is done : I give you my hand on’t, for the service you have this day so gallantly done me.”

“ If then,” Sir Bertrand continued, “ you will assist me to drive black Gwyneth from his lands, they, with those

of Malpas and Harding, will make me the most potent baron on the western march ; and if I do not win an earldom, my son, the son of your Blanche, your grandchild, Sir Roger, will win one, or it will be for lack of courage.”

The old man’s eyes sparkled with intense pleasure, and he cried, striking his hand on the table, “ ’Tis done : — I swear by the cross and sanctuary of our Lady of Malpas, I will do as ye would have me : the marriage shall be solemnized forthwith, and I will join you in your expedition with one hundred men at arms, and three hundred varlets ; for I see honour, fame, riches, and power are within our grasp, and, by my knighthood, Sir Baron, we will not lose them out of fear or indolence.”

“ But when fix ye the day of marriage ? ” cried Sir Paschal, we have no time to lose : the queen is, perhaps, in England by this, and on her way to Bristol, where, it is said, the king will make his stand.”

“ When ! ” cried Taillebois, “ have I not said forthwith ? — Now ! Instantly !

— What, ho ! Blanche ! Blanche Taillebois ! The marriage shall be concluded out of hand.”

“ Ha ! by my soul,” said Du Chatelet, “ you rejoice me beyond measure, thus soon to complete my happiness.”

“ What, ho !” shouted Sir Roger ; “ why the devil does not my daughter answer my summons ? You, sir knave, henchman !”

The henchman, who was sitting at the large table with the men at arms, where the laughter and din were so great they could scarce hear each other, much less any sound coming from a distance, paid no attention to his lord, whose anger became roused at the neglect (as he supposed it) of his vassal. He, therefore, arose from his seat, and, walking up to the table where the henchman sat, lent him a sound buffet on the ear, which quickly awoke his slumbering observation.

“ I cry ye mercy, my Lord Baron !” exclaimed he ; “ what is my offence ?”

“ I will teach thee, varlet !” replied his master, “ to be more attentive in

future ; seek thy lady, and bid her hither on the instant."

The man withdrew, and the baron returned to his companions. In a few minutes the Lady Blanche made her appearance, and requested to know her father's pleasure.

" It is my pleasure, Blanche!" answered Sir Roger, " that thou be here instantly married to my son, Bertrand du Chatelet."

The damsel stood for some time silent and then said smiling, " It is a pity, fair Sirs ! that ye have no other way to pass your time, than that of making a May game of a silly damsel ! Shall I call ye the minstrel ?"

" To the devil with the minstrel !" cried her father ; " I mean no May game ; but that ye be seriously married by my Lord Abbot or our chaplain."

" Married !" exclaimed Blanche, " seriously ; married !"

Her tones were awfully mournful and impressive, and her manner full of solemnity. Sir Roger now began to be wrathful, and said, " Why, daughter !

thou seemest as if thou wast going to be hanged, 'stead of being made a bride ; why stand ye there, as if ye were alone in your chamber, without a soul to speak to ?”

She did indeed stand before them, lost in thought : her eyes seemed wild, and her head giddy : she pressed her hands together, but spoke no word.

“ Speak to her,” said her father to Bertrand ; “ her folly will drive me mad.”

The marcher rose from his seat, and took the hand of his mistress, which action she did not seem to notice.

“ Have I not your consent, fair Blanche !” said he, softly, “ our wooing has been brief ; but trust me I will make thee amends after our marriage.”

His voice seemed to recall her recollection ; for she raised her eyes, and looked upon him with a countenance full of scorn and aversion.

“ Marriage !” she exclaimed, “ marriage ! and with thee ! Oh, no, no, no ; I can never have deserved from Heaven a doom so bitter.”

A sort of hysterical struggle convulsed her features, and she fell breathless on a seat.

“What is the meaning of this?” cried the abbot: “I had deemed the maiden was agreeable to this match.”

“Heed her not lord abbot,” replied her father; “her late sojourn at court hath made her wilful and froward; but she is my daughter, and shall obey my will. Rise, Blanche, and let not thy maidenish fantasies cross the hopes of thy father; obey me, or dread mine eternal curses.”

“My good lord! be more gentle,” cried Ingulphus; “you confound the damsel with your rigour; ye had best give her time to think upon this marriage, and her duty will doubtless overcome all scruples.”

“Not an hour,” cried Taillebois, “will I give her for consideration. What! hath this noble baron, no later than this morning, rescued me from death by the law; and flown to my assistance in time of grievous peril, and doth she refuse to reward the deliverer of her father with so

small a matter as her hand? A mighty boon I ask of her, to marry the noble Chatelet, the best baron on the Welsh border."

"Let us enquire her objections to Sir Bertrand," said the lawyer; "they may doubtless be removed by fair argument."

"What objection can she have?" answered her father: "is he not a proper man? Look at him; here he stands. Is he not brave, noble, generous, and rich? By our Lady, he has few peers, to my mind, in Christendom."

"I will not speak of my person, Sir Roger," said Du Chatelet, "but I will yield to no living man in love and devotion to your daughter; and on this point I will gage battle against the chivalry of Christendom."

"Come, thou undutiful daughter!" said Taillebois, seizing Blanche by the arm, for she had now somewhat recovered, "What answer makest thou? Wilt thou obey me, that cherished thee throughout life; and do'st thou refuse to grant me one poor request?"

“ Would to the Virgin it were my death!” replied Blanche.

“ Thy death!” cried her father; “ and is not thy death in my hands who gave thee life?”

“ I question not your authority,” replied the damsel, with eyes swimming in tears; “ give me death, and I will receive it as the best mark of your love, rather than wed this man.”

“ Ha! by St. Edith!” exclaimed Sir Roger, “ thou perverse one! thou wilt break my heart.—Listen. Thy children by this marriage are like to become of the first rank of nobles in this land; and is nothing to be sacrificed, if there were any thing thou couldst lose by it, to attain that station? What if thou couldst not love Sir Bertrand?”

“ Love him!” ejaculated Blanche, shuddering and casting a glance of horror upon the marcher.

“ I say if thou couldst not love him,” continued Sir Roger; “ though I see no reason that thou shouldst hate him; ye would but be as others have been; and for the ennobling of your children—”

“ Hear me, father! and you, holy

abbot," exclaimed Blanche. "I address myself to ye in particular, because the one is bound by the ties of nature, and the other by those of duty, to protect me in my calamity. It would be a mockery of that holy ordinance, marriage, were I to plight my troth before God to Sir Bertrand du Chatelet. He is, I know not why, the last man on earth I would mingle my lot in life with. Much sooner will I take the veil, and dedicate myself to a virtuous celibacy than join my hand to that of the lord marcher. I acknowledge, with feelings of high gratitude, the great service he hath this day rendered us; but his present conduct shows it was the issue of a selfish feeling, which had no particle of disinterestedness in it."

"Blanche! Blanche!" cried her father, "thou wilt have me distraught. Is this thy pretended gratitude, and thankfulness to a friend, who for our sake has incurred the penalty of death, by rescuing me from the law? I tell thee I have no way left of satisfying this mighty obligation, and mine own

honour, than by requiting him with thy hand, and my fortune ; and if thou wilt not consent, for I pretend not to force thine inclination, I swear by the honour of my ancestors I will never survive the loss of my own."

He drew his basillard from his girdle, and continued — " Speak, Blanche ! If thou dost wish thy father's death, thou hast only to continue thy perverse refusal."

The old man melted into tears, and his daughter sobbed aloud ; but made no reply.

" Speak, Blanche !" he exclaimed ; " my arm is uplifted, — one word can save thy father's life, and thy conscience a load of remorse. — Speak, Blanche !"

His daughter, who imagined he had no intention to execute his threat, but merely practised on her feelings, did not reply. The company, who surrounded him, evidently held the same estimation of his conduct ; but Taillebois, fancying his daughter preferred his death, to the alternative of entering into a disagreeable marriage, cried out, in a tone of jealous rage, " Blanche ! Blanche ! thou

hast slain thy father," and buried the basillard in his side.

The damsel, at this bloody deed, fell headlong forward at her father's feet, and swooned away; whilst the abbot and his companions stood for some moments speechless. At length, they aroused themselves, and the attendant monks, raising Sir Roger up, (for he had sunk upon the table,) bore his bleeding body to a bed; and one of them, who acted in the double capacity of doctor to the soul and to the body, staunched the wound, which, fortunately, was not dangerous. The women raised Blanche, whose insensibility continued, and conveyed her from the hall.

The abbot was much affected at this catastrophe; but his brother made light of it, saying the wound would be of no consequence, and that it was a master-stroke of policy, if by it the young lady should be induced to marry Sir Bertrand. The marcher adduced the frenzy of the baron as a triumphant proof of attachment to himself; and asked his com-

panions if they needed any other evidence than this, that Taillebois would join him in the rebellion?

When Sir Roger had recovered himself, (for he had fainted with loss of blood,) and was somewhat composed, he desired the abbot, Sir Bertrand, Sir Paschal, and his daughter to attend him. The three former left the hall, and joined him in his chamber, where he lay pale and ghastly on the bed. The damsels who attended Blanche led her into the room supported on their arms, and seated her near her father. The colour, which usually enriched her complexion, was entirely fled; and she looked like the lily which has been plucked, and has lost its bloom, though not its fragrance. A sickly yellow overspread her features; she had lost the whole of her spirit and animation; horror appeared to envelope her whole soul; and, at times, it seemed as if a spectre crossed her vision, for she started and violently shuddered. When she had sat a few moments, she fixed her lustreless eyes

upon her father, and gazed at him without intermission. The scene resembled the return of a departed spirit, to warn a dying sinner of his approaching end, rather than that of two living persons. When Sir Roger addressed his daughter by name, she awoke, as from a dream, though her eyes were full upon him.

“Blanche! cried her father, “it is thou who hast brought me to this state; I sought but thy good, and thou hast requited me with death.”

She arose from her seat, and, staggering towards the bed, fell on her knees, and grasped her father's hand. He flung it off, and continued, “Away, thou hypocrite, thou art dutiful in words, but when thou comest to the touchstone, thou art but dross.”

“Ah, holy Virgin! protect me” cried the ill-fated Blanche, bursting into tears; “I am lost for ever.”

“Thou art indeed, Blanche?” replied her parent, “if thou dost not now recall thy refusal. The dagger, which thy disobedience would have guided to my heart, was not sure. The blow was struck

by a hand feeble with age, and trembling with passion; but know, Blanche, and I now swear it by the holy Virgin we adore, that if thou dost not here consent to plight thy troth to Sir Bertrand, I will tear this bandage from my breast, and let out the remains of that blood which gave thee life."

He accompanied his speech with a determined action, and would have fulfilled his threat had not his daughter shrieked out, and retained his arm. She then said in a voice, hollow and impressive, "Do with me as ye list; I am your victim."

Du Chatelet knelt down, took her hand, and kissed it. She rose with a firm and angry countenance, and withdrew it from his caress; but at a glance from her father she restored it, and the marcher found it cold and clammy as in the article of death. The Baron Taillebois, who was touched with the misery of his daughter, endeavoured to soften the painfulness of her feelings, after expressing his joy at her acquiescence, which, he said, restored her to his affec-

tion, and would complete his happiness. He continued, "Thou hast, I know, Blanche, acquired, in the foolish and fantastical court of Edward of Caernarvon, a notion of romantic love, which does not exist upon earth. Experience will make thee wiser, girl; and what thou now deemest the greatest evil that can befall thee, thou wilt find hereafter the best fortune that could chance to thy lot."

"If riches, power, and love can make her happy," cried Du Chatelet, "the lady Blanche shall be an enviable woman. — Beshrew me if there is aught on earth, I would not sacrifice to her enjoyment; even my life."

"Hearest thou him?" said Taillebois to his daughter, "and dost thou regret thine accord? Is not the sterling love of such a noble and gallant knight better than the flimsy vows of some court fop, whose protestations are forgotten as soon as made, as empty of truth as his own head of sense, or his heart of courage? Oh, Blanche! Blanche! bless the Virgin thou art not abandoned to thine own

inclination. Good Son ! and ye friends ! ye will now return homeward, and when I can ride I will be with ye, attended by my daughter. In the mean time, Sir Bertrand, thou mayest make thy preparations for a public bridal."

"I vow by our Lady of Malpas," cried Du Chatelet, "that, anxious as I am to gain the person of the Lady Blanche, and however tormenting delay may be to the ardour of my passion, I will yet do some deed of arms which shall be worthy of her regard, and to this end, Sir Roger, I crave the assistance of your retainers."

"Thou shalt have them," replied Taillebois ; "and would to St. George I could be of thy party. I will order my constable to obey thy summons, and to hold my vassals in readiness to march."

The abbot, Sir Paschal, and the marcher now took their leave of the baron and his daughter ; the men at arms were ordered out ; the abbot and his monks mounted their mules ; whilst Sir Bertrand and his lay-brethren bestrode their coursers. The marshal advanced

with Du Chatelet's banner, and was followed in the same order as had been observed in the morning. They rode swiftly towards Malpas, where they arrived before nightfall.

CHAP. V.

A stately knight without doth wait,
But further he will not hie,
Till the Baron himself shall come to the gate,
And ask him courteously.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

ON the morning subsequent to the return of Sir Bertrand and his friends from Harding, the warder of Malpas, observing a body of men at arms making for the barriers, blew his horn, and sent a varlet to the castle with notice of their approach. The garrison instantly armed, and, with Sir Bertrand at their head, advanced to the gate. The strange force amounted to one hundred men at arms, gallantly mounted, and their leader (who was richly armed) bore for his device, both upon his pennon and shield, a heart transfix'd by an arrow. On their arrival

at the barriers, Jannequin Fierabras came out to meet them, and to enquire their design in coming to Malpas. The knight replied, "I am Aubrey Marcel, brought hither on state business to the Lord Abbot Ingulphus."

"You are welcome, Sir Knight!" cried the baron advancing: "I am Sir Bertrand du Chatelet, and greet ye right heartily: your coming has been expected. — Ho! warder! throw the gate open. — Constable! I charge ye with these men at arms.—Follow him, sirs, he will make ye welcome."

The knight dismounted, and gave his horse, lance, and helmet to his body-squires, who led their comrades after the constable into the town.

Aubrey Marcel was perhaps three and twenty, perfectly handsome and well made; and though he was not very tall, the symmetry of his form made him more remarkable than if he had been of gigantic proportions. He had dark hair and laughter-loving eyes, with a countenance full of hilarity and health. A lady's portrait, attached to his gorget by a crimson rib-

bon, marked him for the poursuivant d'amour *; and the richness of his armour, of his arms, and the housing of his courser, bespoke him a courtly and fashionable gallant. His pennon showed he was but a bachelor †, though the number of his company might have caused him to be mistaken for a knight of higher rank.

Sir Bertrand led the young bachelor to the porch of the abbey, and on application, they had instant admission.

We need not say that the abbot was rejoiced to see his son; for they had been separated many years without seeing each other. Aubrey was but a boy when he first joined Lord Mortimer, (the commencement of their separation,) and he had now attained perfect and settled

* Poursuivant d'amour, was a title that knights and squires gave themselves, on account of their wearing the portrait or colours of their mistresses, and challenging each other to fight in honour of their ladies. *Froissart*, n.

† Bacheloria, the commonalty, as distinguished from baronage. The pennon was the proper ensign of a bachelor.

manhood. Nor was it a slight addition to the abbot's joy that he found his son a knight of so handsome and gallant an appearance; and that he had been intrusted by the queen with a force so considerable as that under his command. Sir Paschal, (who had seen him constantly in London before Mortimer fled to France,) received him with equal affection; and it was some time before he could withdraw himself from their embraces. Sir Paschal at length said, "Whence come you, fair nephew? and how far behind is our sovereign lady, and the prince, with the good Lord Mortimer?"

"By my faith, fair uncle!" replied Aubrey, "I and my Hainaulters landed but three days past at Southampton; we have ridden hither on the pryk; the queen and her suite were hard upon our heels, and are by this time landed in England."

"What persons of note attend her?" said Du Chatelet.

"Many, Sir Knight," replied Aubrey; "but chief that gallant gentleman, Sir

John of Hainault. He is our staff and stay until we be joined by our English friends."

"They will flock to the queen's standard," said Sir Paschal, "when they know she is arrived. The king is at Bristol attended by the Despensers, where, it is reported, they will abide the queen's coming."

"As I rode hitherward," returned Aubrey, "I heard they had quitted that fortress, and made for Ireland. Gloucester does well to look to his safety; if he be caught he will be shown no favour."

"If the king has left England," cried Sir Bertrand, "he has thrown away his last weapon; he had some friends here, and many in Wales, who would have made a stand for him. Our neighbour, Sir Price ap Gwyneth, is his fast liegeman, and could have raised several thousand men on summons for his service; but they will not dare to stir without a leader."

"Ha! by St. George," cried young Marcel, "if they have force to gather

head, they will soon have the king back. It will be good policy to strike the first blow, and nip them in the bud ; what say you, Sir Knight?"

" By our Lady !" replied the baron, who perceived the ardour of the young bachelor tallied well with his intended expedition, " you speak right gallantly, and I will join you in the adventure with a good will. Ap Gwyneth has ever been my foe, and the time sorts to humble his pride."

" And what counsel do ye give, my dear father, and honour'd uncle?" said Aubrey: " doth not our design jump with your advice? Could there be a better opportunity to do the prince good service?"

" Sir Bertrand will best know," replied the abbot, " the fittest season to make an excursion across the border ; and to his judgment we leave all martial considerations. There was a time," he continued, sighing, and looking at his son, " when I might have aided ye in otherwise than by words."

" You do better now, my lord ab-

bot" returned Du Chatelet ; " for you have the head of an experienced soldier, whilst you perform the duties of a young knight in the gallantry of your son."

" A truce to compliment, Sir Baron !" cried Aubrey, " and let us fix a time for our adventure. Our horses are too much worn to ride further to day ; but on the morrow we might leave Malpas at early morn, and be on the other side of the border by sun-rise. Caergwyneth, the castle of Sir Price, is on the west bank of the Dee, and haply we may carry it by surprise."

" He keeps too strict guard," answered the marcher, " or he would have lost it long since. But if we cannot take it by stratagem, we can by force, for it is to be taken ; and I here vow by St. Benedict of Malpas, that I will capture that fortress or lay my bones beneath its walls."

" And I swear by the lady I worship," cried the poursuivant, kissing the portrait which was suspended from his neck, " that I will never see her face

until I set my foot on the highest turret of Caergwyneth."

"Thou art a right forward armeret, Aubrey," said his uncle, "and art resolved, I see, to pay court to thy mistress."

"Ay, good uncle Paschal!" returned Aubrey, "and for her sake I would nigh doff my mail and casque for a lawyer's birret and poke gown."

"Thou mightest make a worse exchange," cried the civilian. "What! thou thinkest, perchance, strong of limb and stout of heart never dwelt under the gown of a lawyer? but I tell thee boy, there are many who, in the day of battle, would cry '*Jamais arrière!*' as loud as your men at arms."

"Ay, and full louder by my faith," cried Aubrey; "for it is known they are doughty men in a combat of words, though I never heard lawyer famed for skill at arms."

"Heard ye never of Hubert de Burg?" returned Sir Paschal; "he was a learned lawyer, and a right valiant captain to the boot."

“Faith, good uncle!” answered Aubrey, “I am not book-learned; and save a little ancient song and romance, which I may have learned from the minstrels, I know as much of times past as they do of me.”

“It is enough for a knight,” cried Du Chatelet, “to be skilled in deeds of arms, without binding his free soul in the trammels of bookish jargon. The best history ever written will not add an ounce of weight to his battle-axe, nor one jot of courage to his heart. Let priests and gownsmen become learned, but let my books be my lance and courser, my good sword, and my casque of war. If a knight be perfect in his warlike exercises he is a fit peer for a king, or monseigneur St. George.”

“You are right, Sir Baron!” said the abbot. “Each man should be alone studied in his province of life; and, trust me, I should prefer iron mail and a barbed war-horse, to the ecclesiastical power and soft living which I enjoy as abbot of this rich monastery. Beshrew the hearts which caused the downfall of

our noble order. Edward of Caernarvon was one of our persecutors. He hath sown a cruel seed, and he shall reap a bitter harvest."

The lord marcher now departed from the abbey, leaving the poursuivant to unarm and refresh himself after his morning's ride.

In the meantime, whilst the abbot and his friends were engaged in the foregoing discourse, the constable of Malpas had engaged himself in providing quarters for the men at arms, attached to Sir Aubrey Marcel, and as each had his body-squire, and squire of the lance, they amounted to three hundred horsemen. The castle of Du Chatelet was already filled with the baron's own retainers; and Fierabras was, therefore, obliged to seek quarters in the town for the great body of the company; but the squires of Sir Aubrey, and about a dozen of his hauthoners *, were stationed at the abbey. The remainder were accommodated at an inn, or hosterie, called the Castle, and at private houses, whose

* Homo loricatus; a man at arms.

owners, much against their inclination, received these military guests. The hosterie was kept by a man named Miles Aprisidly, who, in the days of his youth, had been a soldier under the renowned Edward Longshanks, and had seen much service in the Scottish wars. He was now about fifty, and his lack of exercise, after the toils of his military life, had made him pursy and bloated. He was a great favourite with the men at arms, and other soldiers of the garrison, as well for his frank and hearty humour, as because he was the father of a very pretty girl, who, at this time, was openly besieged by the red squire. When not on duty at the castle, Fierabras usually spent his time at the hostel with the fair Joan, who, fearing his power and interest with their liege lord, durst not reject his attentions ; but she was secretly attached to the minstrel, whom our readers have seen at the castle, and who was named Oliver Blondel.

Aprisidly stood at the door of his hostel, clad in a jerkin of blue Normandy cloth, and under-garments of the same stuff, as Jannequin led a score of the Hainaulters

down the causeway. When he came opposite the inn he ordered a halt, and nodding to the hosteller, cried "Ho! Friar Miles! I have brought a few brothers to your monastery."

"Do ye bring church scot and wax scot, ciricksceat and aelmefeo?" replied Aprisidly; "if ye have not, ye may chance to ride further for a lodging."

"Ha! by Notre Dame de Roquema-dour," cried Jannequin, "my friends are men of substance, and have wherewithal to make due offerings to the shrine of your patroness St. Joan."

"St. Joan have them in her keeping then," answered the hosteller. "Dismount, Sirs, if it like ye."

He then addressed himself to several of the men at arms; but they, being foreigners, and ignorant of his language, made him no reply.

"Hollo! Sir Constable," cried Miles, "are your monks of the anchorite order, who are forbidden the use of speech? or are they all under the weight of some magic spell, which has clapped a padlock on their tongues?"

“ Neither,” replied Jannequin, laughing; “ they are from Hainault, and do not understand English.”

Fierabras addressed the men at arms in French, and they instantly dismounted, and gave their horses to their retainers, who led them into the stables belonging to the hostel. The fair Joan, attracted by their arrival, now came forth. She was habited in a kirtle of white russet, with slight broders of silver lace around the hem and waist; and her chitte or shirt, puckered or folded from the waist to the neck, was of fine napery, worked on the back and bosom with gold thread: her girdle, supporting a bunch of keys, was of velvet, attached by a silver buckle; and her short woollen boots were fancied and gartered with knots of ribbon, the ends of which depended below her kirtle. She was scarce twenty years old, and was well worthy the attention of the Red Squire. Her face was round and rosy, bespeaking health and content, and her eyes, broad, black, and sparkling, spoke her meaning clearly before she opened her mouth. Her

complexion was dark, and her black hair hung in clusters down her neck, and upon her shoulders. She was arch and mischievous; but her playfulness was frolicksome, and not malignant; for her character was humane and forgiving, without any spice of envy, hatred, or uncharitableness. She was her father's only child; and it was supposed would not marry without a handsome dowry, independent of the military fief which Aprisidly held as homager to the Baron du Chatelet. It was no wonder then, that Fierabras, the minstrel, and many others, should make love to the fair saint of the Castle. Such attractions were irresistible, and drew a great concourse of customers to the hostel.

The Red Squire took off his hood when he saw his mistress, and said to her, "Ha! fair Joan, thou lookest more beautiful than the queen of England."

"How can'st thou tell that," replied the damsel, "when thou hast never seen her?"

"Not seen Queen Isabel!" cried the Squire; "by St. Roche à Bearn! I have

seen her many a good time and oft before she was Edward's wife ; and she hath seen me too."

"What !" said Miles Aprisidly, "thou wouldest have us credit thee, that she fell in love with thy proper person."

"Truth to tell," replied Jannequin, after some consideration, "I was then squire to a knight of her chamber ; and many a gold crown hath she given me for little or no service. Ye would not think she did thus out of her nobility ? No, no, good fellow, I have seen somewhat of the world, and know better."

"Tush ! Master Constable," cried the hosteller, "Queen Isabel is a gallant and a generous dame ; her hand was free, and her heart open to all her domestics : and I fear me, ye requite her but ill for her courtesy."

"Ill !" replied Jannequin, "what ill have I done her, by saying she hath remarked me. By St. George, I was well looked at by many a fair dame in the lists at Bourdeaux, when my good lance bore the Lord D'Albret over his horse's croupe."

“Thou did'st bear the Lord D'Albret over his horse's croupe!” cried Apri-sidly, incredulously.

“Aye, by my faith,” cried Fierabras; “the lists were proclaimed for all knights and squires. I ran six courses against D'Albret. The three first we both lost our helmets; the fourth our lances were shivered to the spear-head; the fifth I unhelmed my adversary without losing my own casque; and at the sixth I flung him out of his saddle.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” cried Joan, laughing with great glee, “thou hast been dreaming, Sir Jannequin! or thou hast learned this tale from Oliver Blondel.”

“St. Denis's curse upon Oliver Blondel!” cried Fierabras; but before he could utter another word, he received so smart a box on the ear from the fair hand of his mistress, that he staggered several paces.

“Ha! St. George!” cried the Red Squire, “what mean ye by this, fair damsel? wherein did I offend ye?”

“Did you not?” replied Joan; “you are a right courtly squire to be trooping

forth your curses in the presence of a woman."

"By my troth, fair Joan!" returned Fierabras, "I cry ye mercy; but I will pass your fisticuff with added weight to the next man that angers me."

The hosteller heartily enjoyed this scene, and said to the squire, "By our lady! Sir Constable, she but gave ye her hand, which you have some time sought; and you will now know what it's made of. She is of a weighty fisted family, I promise ye; and she retains the old strength and spirit of her forefathers."

"Zounds! man, I never doubted it," answered the Red Squire; "and little wish had I to put her to the trial; but touching the tilts I can tell ye—"

"A marvellous lying story," cried Joan.

"Nay, but by my own life, fair Joan," continued Fierabras—

"Which is not worth the swearing by," interrupted the damsel.

"I did tilt with D'Albret," cried Jannequin,

“ And got woefully beaten,” pursued his mistress.

“ By my soul,” cried the Red Squire, in a violent rage, “ if thou wert a man, damsel ! as thou art a woman, I would cram the lie down thy throat.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” exclaimed Joan, nearly bursting with laughter, “ what a gallant squire ! Thou art a second Sir Tristram, ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

Miles Aprisidly joined in the laugh against the Red Squire, and said, “ is it the custom, Sir Constable, in your country, for men at arms to fly in a passion at the jokes of silly women ? a right valiant custom it is.”

“ Nay, Miles ! ” cried Jannequin, reddening with shame, “ I meant not to threaten thy fair daughter ; — by my faith, I would strike him dead who should do her wrong ; but the very horse, which is now my courser of war, I won for prize in the lists at Bourdeaux, with my best suit of mail ; and that is of Milan steel, finely emblazoned, as becomes a squire of renown in arms.”

“ Who has lost his trumpeter,” said Joan.

“ Ha! thou mayest rail,” cried the Red Squire, “ marry, I care not ; I shall have my revenge when thou becomest my wife, Joan !”

“ By my truly,” cried the maiden, “ if you wait till then, your revenge will be frost-bitten : I have no mind to quit merry England ; and it is said thou art but a bird of passage.”

“ What !” answered Fierabras, “ would’st thou prefer being the wife of some English yeoman, to being the lady of a French knight, and manorial baron.”

“ Thou art not either yet, Sir Constable !” cried the damsel.

“ By our lady of Malpas,” answered Jannequin, “ I have gold enow to purchase a castle and castellary ; and the Baron du Chatelet would make me a knight to-morrow.”

“ Would he make thee a baron, Sir Constable ?” cried Joan ; “ I would not marry thee to quit this land. — I will die where I have lived, — no grave in

France shall hold the bones of Joan Aprisidly."

"And what sayest thou, Friar Lusty Paunch?" said the constable; "hast thou no ambition to ennoble thy daughter?"

"Ennoble, i' faith!" cried Miles: "Jannequin! I know the trick of your worsted nobility too well to be caught in a trap; but if the girl has a fancy to thee, let her take thee, in the name of St. Benedict, — she shall have my consent."

"Gallantly said, my old burly cock!" returned the constable; "thou can'st say no fairer; I answer for her consent; for she has not the heart to resist: a brodered jacket and gilt dagger will bear the palm over a plonket coat and clouted shoes."

"Faith!" said the maiden, "with me, meek heart and gentle 'haviour would have more weight than a bold braggart in a tawdry garment."

"I will not bandy words with thee now, fair Joan!" cried the Red Squire; but I will press thee hard at a proper season. Miles, give these gentlemen

good entertainment, as thou lovest me, and thy lord. Fare thee well, Joan; I shall see thee again ere nightfall."

He then left the hostel, and returned to the castle. The men at arms, during their conversation, had been disarmed by their squires; and were now ready to attack the provision, which the hosteller and his daughter prepared to set before them.

CHAP. VI.

Havoc, havoc rag'd around,
Many a carcase strew'd the ground;
Ravens drank the purple flood,
Raven plumes were dy'd in blood.
Frighted crowds from place to place,
Eager, hurrying, breathless, pale,
Spread the news of their disgrace,
Trembling as they told the tale.

JONES'S *Reliques of the Welsh Bards.*

THE day had scarcely broken, when the sound of the trumpet summoned all the men at arms in Malpas to the tilt-yard, preparatory to marching on their expedition. Sir Aubrey Marcel was already armed, and came forth from the monastery, attended by his father and uncle, to mount his courser, which one of the squires held at the porch. The horse, a dapple grey of great strength and beauty, was barbed for war, and bore upon his chamfrein (an iron mask which covered his head, ears, and face),

the poursuivant's device, in a star field, with a spike projecting from the centre. Sir Aubrey's shield, which hung upon his breast, bore the device also; and on the crest of his helmet he wore the hood of a lady, decorated with a gold chain. On arriving at the tilt-yard, Sir Aubrey found the retainers of the marcher already drawn up under his banner, together with those of Sir Roger Taillebois under the banner of that baron, and commanded by his constable; they had been summoned the preceding evening by Sir Bertrand, and had arrived first on the field. The Hainaulters, under the pennon of Sir Aubrey, soon entered the yard, and he placed himself at their head. The entire force consisted of five hundred men at arms, with two thousand cross-bow men, archers and varlets. Sir Bertrand came last, completely armed, and attended by his body-squires. He rode up to Sir Aubrey and saluted him; the young bachelor returned his compliment, and said, "We have a gallant force, Sir Knight, and must not return without doing some deed worthy our appearance."

“ We will return with honour,” replied the marcher, “ or return no more,”

“ I crave a boon, Sir Knight,” cried Aubrey : “ I pray ye grant to me and my companions, the honour of the vaward.”

“ Ha ! by St. Edward,” replied Du Chatelet, “ that is more than I can do ; my own men at arms will brook no superiors in the path of honour, and my constable claims the vaward for his own station.”

The eyes of the poursuivant flashed fire through the bars of his visor at this refusal ; and he cried aloud, “ Mate ye me with your vassal, Sir Knight ?”

The marcher looked calmly at him for a few moments, and then replied, “ I intended ye no slight by the refusal, Sir Poursuivant ; but I am on your master’s adventure ; and it seems to me somewhat too much that ye should reap all the honour, as well as all the profit.”

“ And pray, Sir Knight,” cried Aubrey, “ whom doth your lack of courtesy term my master ? If it be the prince, whose knight I am, he is your master as

well as mine; and, by St. George, I hold it a high honour to belong to so noble a patron."

"I cry ye mercy, Sir Aubrey!" answered Du Chatelet: "I thought ye served Lord Mortimer; I was so informed."

"You thought I served!" cried Aubrey. "Do you see the Lord Mortimer's badge upon my arms? No, Du Chatelet, thou knowest better; and by mine eternal soul, I will find a time to thank thee for thy courtesy."

The baron hastily closed his visor, and caught a lance from his squire, intending to punish the young poursuivant for his hardihood. Aubrey, who despised his menace, laid his spear in the rest, and stood firm, awaiting his attack; but Du Chatelet, perceiving the folly and impolicy of this feud, and that it might prove fatal to his interest, governed his temper, and raised the point of his lance. He then rode away to his own retainers, and ordered the marshal to advance with his banner.

A postern gate, which opened from the lists without the town, was now

expanded, and the men at arms of Du Chatelet, filed away in companies of twenty, each company having its constable, or captain. To these succeeded the baron himself, attended by his body-squires, four in number, one having his lance, a second for his helmet, a third for his battle-axe, and a fourth for his war-target.

The Hainaulters next advanced in the same order, and Sir Aubrey, attended by his squires of the body, brought up their rear. They were followed by the bowmen, archers, and varlets, in their respective companies; and the vassals of Sir Roger Taillebois formed the rearward.

The morning was damp, cold, and foggy; and those in the rear division could not see the banner of the marshal which preceded the vaward. They made a circuit round the walls of the town, in order to gain the road which crossed the border, to the hamlet of Bangor on the Dee. In a short time they entered the march, which was easily distinguished from the country on the other side of

Malpas, by the ravaged lands, desolated farms, burnt houses, and desert solitudes, they met with in their advance. They passed several villages void of a single living creature, except birds and beasts of game or prey ; and from Malpas to Bangor, a distance of six miles, they saw no human beings but each other. The ruinous war pursued by the chieftains on either side the border, had indeed wrought that solitude, which the Romans called, so emphatically, peace,—the entire devastation and depopulation of the country. The sun began to rise when they had advanced within a mile of Bangor ; and the Red Squire, with the baron's assent, rode forward with three score lances, to seize and occupy the bridge over the Dee. The mist soon cleared away before the beams of the sun, and curled up towards the mountains of Wales, which were a few miles distant. Objects afar off now became distinctly visible, and the castle of Caergwyneth, standing on a rock a few bow-shots beyond the river, shewed the companions the end of their destination.

The only pass was by the bridge at Bangor, which was a mile lower down, there being no ford passable by men at arms heavily harnessed. A thick wood of tall and ancient trees, part of the forest of Threap, concealed the hamlet and bridge of Bangor from the road, and served as a curtain or screen to any party in possession of the place. Ten thousand men might have been stationed in and about the hamlet without fear of discovery, so entirely were they engirt by this wood; the only apertures to which were by roads cut through the midst of the trees. The Baron du Chatelet had arrived at the entrance of the wood, and was slowly pursuing his course, when his ears were assailed by the distant sounds of a combat. An uproar, resembling the trampling of horses, and the charging of men at arms, with the admixture of their battle cries, pealed through the air, and caused a most confused and dreadful din. Sir Bertrand ordered a halt, drew his men back from the wood, and stationed them in ambush at each side of the road skirt-

ing the defile. Each man tightened his armour, grasped his lance, and prepared for action, as they knew now their enemies were abroad. Sir Aubrey Marcel had ridden hitherto sullen and down-cast; but he no sooner "heard the din of battle bray," than he forgot his feud with the marcher, and resolved to maintain his fame as *Le Poursuivant d'Amour*. They had scarcely made their dispositions when the uproar increased, and in a few minutes the remnant of that troop in advance with the Red Squire, returned at full gallop, followed by at least five hundred men at arms, shouting the war-cries of several Welsh chieftains, among which that of *Ap Gwyneth* was principally audible. When the pursued and the pursuers had passed the defile, and were upon the open plain, Sir Aubrey and his *Hainaulters* galloped from their ambush, crying "*St. George for Marcel!*" They were followed by the baron and his retainers, who cried out "*Malpas for Du Chatelet!*" The enemy, observing they were entrapped, and must fight or fly, like good men at arms, chose

the more honourable alternative. They abandoned the pursuit of Jannequin's company, and wheeling round, prepared to sustain the attack of their new antagonists. They had need of preparation, and of courage to boot; for Aubrey and his Hainaulters, and Du Chatelet and his Hauthoners, fell upon them like lions. In the first charge great numbers of the enemy, and a few on the side of the marcher were unhorsed; and some of the men at arms who could not be aided and remounted by their squires, were trampled to death in the *melée*, or suffocated in their armour. The fight was renewed with swords, battle-axes and maces, which flew round the heads of the combatants like the flails of husbandmen. Sir Bertrand well proved his knighthood; no man received a blow from his two-handed sword which did not bring him instantly to the ground.

The young *poursuivant* also fairly won his spurs, for he that day clove more crests with his battle-axe than any other combatant. The marcher, Du Chatelet, had need of all the strength and courage

of his retainers, for the enemy were in greater numbers than his party, and fought with a skill and resolution not to be excelled. The bowmen and archers were here useless ; for they could not exercise their arms without doing as much damage to their companions as to the foe ; and were therefore constrained to rest unwilling spectators of a combat which they would gladly have shared. The Welch, too, were elated with their victory over the party of the Red Squire, most of which they had slain or captured ; and though they were taken in an ambush, which put them into some confusion, yet, when the first shock was over, and they perceived their superiority in numbers, their confidence returned, and they fought without fear or hesitation.

It was, therefore, by dint of sheer valour that the English vanquished their adversaries, for so they did ; and the victors did not gain the battle without a hard struggle, and the loss of several of their party. The Welsh chieftain, who commanded the enemy, endeavoured, on

perceiving all hope of victory lost, to break through his adversaries, and had nigh succeeded, when he encountered Sir Aubrey Marcel. The two knights came within the scope of each other's weapons; and the Welchman observing the badge of Aubrey, cried, "Ha! Sir Pursuivant, thou fightest merrily for thy lady Love."

"By St. George! Sir Knight," returned Aubrey, "I must do her better service; for I vow by the Holy Virgin, I will never see her face till thou art my captive."

"Put forth thy prowess!" cried the Welchman, "and take me if thou can'st."

They spurred their coursers against each other, and renewed the combat with great eagerness and gallantry, whilst the men at arms, attached to each, gathered new life from the courage of their leaders. The Welch knight was armed with a glaive, or long sword, with which he laid on blows so thick and heavy, that the casque of the poursuivant seemed one sheet of flame; and, had it not been of well-tempered metal, the weapon of the Welchman would have soon made an en-

trance. The hood which Aubrey wore upon his crest, was cut into ribbons, but still kept its place attached by the chain. On the other hand, the poursuivant made his battle-axe ring dreadfully on the helmet of his antagonist, who frequently bent beneath the weight of the blows; in a few minutes his crest and visor were cut away, and a continuance of the combat must have been fatal to his life. His squires, faithful to their duty, sacrificed themselves for the preservation of their master. They spurred between the combatants, and encountered the rage of the young knight, who, as he dealt his blows fiercely around, cried out, "Ha! recreant! dost thou fly the combat? Turn back, Sir Knight, or I will proclaim thee coward. By Saint Edward, thou shalt not thus escape me."

The Welch knight, followed by as many of his men at arms as could withdraw from the fight, galloped back to the defile, pursued by Aubrey Marcel and his Hainaulters. As the Welchmen passed the archers and bowmen, they were saluted by a shower of arrows, and a vol-

ley of bolts from the cross-bows, which brought many men and horses to the ground; the greater part, notwithstanding this discharge, passed the defile, and made for the bridge of Bangor, still followed by Sir Aubrey and his men at arms. The poursuivant, when he came near the bridge, over which the fugitives had passed, observed a large company of bowmen and archers drawn up on the other side of the river; but these fellows no sooner descried their men at arms routed, flying, and pursued, than they dispersed, without command, and each man fled for the fastest. The young bachelor was now obliged to halt, as well to rest his horses, which were much jaded with the hot fight and pursuit, as to await the coming up of Sir Bertrand du Chatelet and the remainder of the troops, without whose support it would neither have been safe nor prudent to advance. The men at arms who had escaped, amounted to at least two hundred; and if those archers and bowmen who had fled were collected, as would doubtless be the case, they would still form a formidable body,

whilst the poursuivant, unsupported, had only about eighty spears. He therefore, dismounted, and took possession of the bridge, where he remained until the arrival of his companions. In a short time, about a dozen Hainault spears, left (at the commencement of the pursuit) to guard the prisoners who had been captured by their company, brought them to the bridge, where each captive was delivered to his master or conqueror. They were followed by Sir Bertrand, the Red Squire, and his companions, who had rejoined their lord, and the rest of the men at arms, bowmen, and varlets, who had also their prisoners under guard, together with the spoils of the field, which had been packed on sumpter horses. Here they made a grand halt ; the men at arms dismounted, and each master ransomed his captive, courteously taking his word for the sum at which the ransom was fixed. This, indeed, was the age of true chivalry, and honour ; for no knight, or squire, who had given his word, harboured any thought or design of breaking it. The parol was sacred, and indissoluble ;

but by the performance of the undertaking; and it happened more than once, about this time, that knights, captured in battle, who had given their words for ransom, refused to be absolved by the Pope from their obligations; and resolutely performed the utmost article of their compacts. This honourable behaviour, which was general throughout Christendom, begat, and sustained a commensurate spirit of courtesy, to which the civilisation of Europe is, perhaps, greatly indebted. Several Welch knights were among the prisoners, who paid good round sums for their ransoms; nor did the meanest man at arms escape, without satisfying his master for his freedom. The whole of them promised not to bear arms until their ransoms were discharged, and they were then allowed to depart. When this scene was concluded, the English re-girthed their horses, tightened their armour, and remounted.

They passed the bridge, and proceeded along the bank of the Dee, until they came within the castellary or precinct of Caergwyneth. The castle was finely

situated, standing on the top of a hill ; which, towards the river, was high, steep, rugged, and inaccessible ; but, on the land-side, was approachable by a gentle ascent of unbroken greensward. It was a fortility of great strength and beauty ; and to sustain and preserve it, as a defence to the principality, the country within the border, which was exceedingly populous, paid castle-guard, a rent or subsidy for watch and ward. The fortress had four round-towers, connected by an embattled wall, with a keep in the midst ; and, like a fortified town, had barriers encircling the gate ; a deep ditch, cut round the castle, formed an inlet for the river, and greatly strengthened it : altogether, few castles were stronger, or better enabled, by art and nature, to make a handsome and vigorous defence. The walls were crowded with men at arms, and other soldiers, as the English approached, many of whom were, doubtless, fugitives from the combat.

The Baron du Chatelet ordered his men to dismount about two bow-shots

from the castle; and they instantly set about forming a camp, regularly to besiege the place. The varlets were employed to cut sods, and stakes, with which the men at arms and bowmen constructed huts. The tent of the baron, which had been brought on sumpter-horses, was also expanded. It was of red cloth, embroidered with his arms, and before it was erected his banner. His own men at arms, archers, bowmen, and varlets, encamped in huts adjoining his tent. The vassals of Taillebois occupied the next station, with a small interval between; the banner of Sir Roger being set up before the hut of his constable. Sir Aubrey Marcel held the most distant post, (which guarded the postern of the fortress,) denoted by his pennon planted before the door of his hut. These dispositions were made without any interruption on the part of the enemy; and when they were completed, the baron sent his constable to the post of Sir Aubrey, to request he would attend him in his tent. The poursuivant, after some

hesitation consented; and advanced to the pavilion of Du Chatelet, who came out to meet him, and made many apologies for the offence which he had given him in the morning.

“Had I known but half your valour, Sir Aubrey,” he cried, “the vaward had been yours without a word. — Forgive me, if I then held ye a raw and untried knight, whose sword was but maiden, and his spurs unbought. I now know your chivalry; and, by my soul, you shall have no further cause to complain.”

“I am satisfied, Sir Baron,” replied Aubrey, “and I cannot much blame you for putting trust in tried men at arms, rather than in a knight bachelor, who has yet his fame to win.”

“You have begun gallantly, Sir Pursuivant;” cried Du Chatelet.

“But, by my faith,” continued Aubrey, without noticing the marcher’s compliment, “I think we should have done ye service as good as the valiant squire. — He knows how to run, as well as to ride.”

Fierabras, who was present, turned

red with passion at this reproach, and internally vowed to be revenged, but made no reply.

It was resolved, after some time spent in conference between Sir Bertrand and the Poursuivant, to send a summons to Caergwyneth, threatening to storm the castle, and put all within to the sword without accepting ransom, if it were not instantly surrendered. This message was borne by one of the baron's body-squires; but he soon returned with an answer, saying, the besieged would trust in God and their own courage for their defence, and that they would not surrender whilst they could hold the place. It was then deemed best to send to Malpas for machines of war, (which might be brought to the encampment the following day,) in order to batter down the walls; and the more to hasten their arrival, the constable was despatched, with three score spears, to give them conduct. The besiegers lay quiet the remainder of the day, the soldiers having plenty of provisions, and the horses being turned loose in the fine meadows which adjoined the

castle. After the knights had dined, which they did together, they passed the evening with wine and minstrelsy. Oliver Blondel had attended the expedition of his lord, and charmed the souls of the fierce warriors with the melodious tones of his harp. The constable of Harding, and many of the men at arms, crowded round the tent to listen, and forgot the toils of the day in the harmony of the minstrel. When Oliver had played for an hour, the baron bade him rest, and presented him with some wine in a silver goblet, which he desired him to keep.

The minstrels were chronicles of the time ; and no lord, or other noble, who had any regard for his fame, as a gallant knight, and hospitable baron, might pass over the services of his harper unrewarded. They were idolized by the common people, and shared with the clergy that absolute dominion over the public mind, which their rivals claimed to be due alone to themselves. But the minstrels did not, like the religious, abuse that power which they possessed. They were commonly men of a purely poetical

cast, and devoting their hearts to the beauties of their profession, forgot, in the heaven of fancy, all little and worldly considerations. Far from endeavouring to keep the minds of the people in darkness, which the priestcraft of the monks taught as good policy, they endeavoured, by the enchanting power of song, to raise their auditors to every thing gallant, noble, and chivalrous; to despise death in pursuit of glory; to sacrifice ambition to love or duty; and to make honour the guiding star of their adoration. They encouraged fidelity, disinterestedness, hospitality, and all the virtues; whilst they lashed vice with an unsparing hand; and they were as much beloved by the good, as they were feared, and secretly detested by the inhospitable and bad.

The Baron du Chatelet was neither good nor generous; but he affected to be both; and in the hope of reaping great advantages by his shew of munificence, he was willing to make the sacrifice of a few presents to his panegyrist. The minstrel laid his harp upon the table as

he stood up to receive the baron's gift, and, having drank the healths of the knights, placed the goblet in his bosom. Aubrey took up the harp, and ran his hand over the strings. "What! Sir Poursuivant," cried Du Chatelet, "I warrant you are a troubadour, and can sing many a roundelay to your mistress's beauty."

Aubrey smiled; but did not reply. He fixed the harp, and, after a few flourishes, began to play a German dance which he had learned in Hainault. The tune was soft, gliding, and melodious; and, according to the measure of that day's dancing, slow, and revolving. The minstrel himself heard it with delight, whilst the men at arms gazed on the young knight with open mouth, and ears drinking every particle of sound. The baron even forgot his character, and became transformed into a human being of virtuous susceptibilities at the intonation of this beautiful air. When Aubrey concluded, there was a pause of silence for some moments; and then murmurs of admiration broke from the soldiers, not

such as courtiers would bestow on an indifferent performer, but such as those rough and warlike adventurers, whose souls knew no polish, who had never before heard minstrelsy so delicately executed, and who enjoyed every transport with a perfect delight, could express for the person who had given them the highest possible gratification. The Pursuivant again took the harp, and the tent was instantly silent as the sepulchre of death. He played several lively French dances, and airs of the Gascon troubadours, some of which were well known, and were recognized by the men at arms in their more courtly guise, with smiles of deep and greedy enjoyment. The minstrel felt a pang of bitter disappointment shoot athwart his pleasure, on hearing himself surpassed on that instrument, the cultivation of which had been his greatest delight. He was at once overcome with transport, and overwhelmed with regret; joy and sorrow were so mingled and identified in the same feelings, that he could not determine which of them predominated. His regret, how-

ever, was by no means selfish, he rejoiced with true gladness of spirit, that his professional art had received so high a cultivation ; and as he listened, with an eye glistening with tears, to the perfect execution of the young knight, he only regretted that he was still unable to elicit those tones which appeared to cost Aubrey so little trouble to develope. When the minstrelsy was concluded, regular watches were set around the encampment, and the soldiers retired to rest.

On the morrow, soon after sun-rise, several wains arrived in the camp, bearing the warlike machines necessary for attacking the castle, escorted by the Red Squire, and the spears under his command. One of the machines, called a passavant, was a large wooden pent-house, of four stories in height, and capable of sustaining four-score cross-bow men. It was borne from Malpas in several pieces, and put together on arriving before the castle. Another, named malveisin, (ill neighbour,) was a device used to cast stones ; there were also others, bearing the different names of mangonel,

martinet, trebuchet, war-wolf, and don-daine, all of which were artillery, whereby to bombard a town or castle with greater or smaller stones.

The soldiers were soon in motion; several parties of men at arms were ordered by the baron to mount and scour the country for forage; commands which they very willingly obeyed. The bowmen and archers were then drawn out under their centenaries and vintenars; and, under cover of their pavaises, or shields, which were fastened above their heads, they began a galling fire upon the enemy, who returned it powerfully from their espringalles and bucolles within the castle. Sir Bertrand, Sir Aubrey, and the constable of Harding, next mustered their men at arms, who, by dint of strength, drew the passavant up the ascent, and stationed it within a few yards of the gate. It was then filled with cross-bow men, who let fly so many bolts, that, in a short time none of the Welsh dared make their appearance on the battlements. The poursuivant, the constable of Harding, and Fierabras, now prepared

to ascend the walls, and for that purpose advanced to the brink of the ditch, where they fixed their scaling-ladders. Aubrey Marcel, followed closely by his squire holding his pavais over him, first mounted, with his battle-axe in his hand, and had nearly gained the rampart before he was observed. The warder, in the turret of the gate, first descried him, and gave the alarm. The knight, Sir Price ap Gwyneth, sallied from a barbican, armed with a mace of lead, and his men at arms, following the example of their leader, manned the ramparts in despite of the bolts and arrows of the English.

The escalade, being attempted in three different places, necessarily weakened the defence made in either; but Sir Price, who now came hand to hand with Aubrey Marcel, fought with great courage and resolution. His followers threw down upon the assailants hot water, bars of iron, huge stones, and the feu grecquois, the latter of which, composed of sulphur, naphtha, pitch, gum, and bitumen, could only be extinguished by vinegar, mixed with sand and urine, or by raw hides.

It burnt the flesh from the bones, and caused inexpressible agony. Many of the assailants were beaten from the ladders, or, mad with the torment of the hot water, or Greek fire, sprang headlong into the ditch, and were drowned with the weight of their armour. On the other side, the English bowmen and archers kept up an unceasing discharge, which took great effect, and slaughtered the Welch without power of resistance; the cloth-yard shafts of the Cheshire yeomanry threaded the corselets and brigandines of their foes through and through. The young poursuivant gave direful blows with his war-axe, and more than once cleared the rampart, and forced the Welch knight, Ap Gwyneth, to retire without the sweep of his terrible weapon. At length he obtained a footing on the parapet, and with his single arm sustained himself, until he was joined by a body of his companions, who now swarmed up the ladders after their leader. — The Welch knight endeavoured to escape from the press, with the intention of retiring to the keep, or house of re-

fuge; but the young poursuivant pursued him, and cried, "Stay, Sir Knight, or I will cleave thee to the brain!"

Ap Gwyneth turned about, and prepared once more to defend himself; he raised his mace, and cried aloud, "thou didst swear, Sir Poursuivant, but yesterday, that thou wouldst not see the face of thy mistress till thou hadst me prisoner; but thou seest I am not yet thine."

"By our lady," returned Aubrey, "I have not seen her yet, nor will I till I have fulfilled my vow."

"The lion is but at bay," cried the Welch chieftain; "beware his fangs."

With these words, he renewed the combat with his mace, and fought boldly and valiantly; but the poursuivant speedily brought him on his knees.

"Yield thee, my prisoner, Sir Knight," cried Aubrey.

"I yield—I yield to thee, in God's name!" replied the chieftain, and surrendered his mace.

"Who art thou?" cried Aubrey; "I deem thou art noble by thy gallant bearing."

“ I am Ap Gwyneth,” returned the Knight, “ lord of this castle. But, haste thou with me, and let us stop this slaughter. The castle, I confess, is lost. Thou alone hast won it.”

The knights left the rampart, but in a few minutes returned; and Aubrey then cried out to the assailants, “ Hold your hands, gallant gentlemen, as ye love me; but maintain your posts.”

“ Throw down your weapons,” cried the Welch chieftain to his retainers, “ and give them entrance. Unbar the portal, and let down the bridge.”

The foemen at first stood in suspense; but, fancying these orders arose from some compact of surrender, they obeyed the mandates of their leaders, and expected, in silence, the issue of the treaty.

CHAP. VII.

Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds, looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy
To kings, that fear their subjects' treachery.

Third Part, Henry VI.

IT will now be necessary to inform our readers of the singular occurrence which had induced Sir Aubrey Marcel to stop short in the career of victory, and put an end to the attack. On quitting the ramparts with Ap Gwyneth, he had been conducted by that chieftain to the keep in the midst of the fortress, where were placed for security that portion of the tenants of the castle who did not engage in its defence. The door was thrown open; for it was not the intention of the besieged any longer to defend themselves; and, on ascending the stair-case and entering the principal chamber, the first sight which struck the poursuivant was King Edward, attended by the Earl of

Gloucester, the Chancellor de Baldock, and some few others of his household. The King stood with his back to the fire, and seemed the least concerned of any man present at the untowardness of his situation ; but, Gloucester, who, before the entrance of Sir Aubrey, had paced the room almost without intermission, sometimes, but rarely, making a halt, and listening with a straining ear and blood-shot eye, if the foe were bursting upon them, now laid his hand upon his dagger, and seemed disposed to sell his life rather than surrender ; but, observing that Aubrey was not followed by his men, and supposing he was their prisoner, he exclaimed, “ Ha ! traitor ! do'st thou forget thine allegiance ? Why bend ye not your knee to your sovereign ? ”

“ Despenser ! ” returned the pursuivant, “ I know of no traitor here but thee ! and I arrest thee in the name of Prince Edward and Queen Isabel Ap-Gwyneth ! thy head shall answer for his safety.”

The Welch knight, alarmed by this menace, gave the favourite in charge to

several men at arms, who disarmed him. The poursuivant and Sir Price then returned to the ramparts, and issued those orders we have before seen. The Marcher du Chatelet immediately took possession of the court and battlements with his men at arms; and Sir Aubrey descending, attended by the Welch chieftain, placed a strong guard at the door of the keep, to prevent the escape of the king and his attendants.

On approaching Du Chatelet, Sir Aubrey cried out gaily, "News, my Lord Baron! we have ended the war; the King and Despenser are in the keep."

"Ha! by the Holy Virgin, Sir Knight," cried Bertrand, "dost thou say true? Are Edward and Glo'ster our prisoners?"

"Come and see," returned Aubrey; "thou knowest them both."

"If it be true," cried the baron, "I would not barter this day's victory for an earldom. Lead on."

The knights then proceeded up the stair, followed by the men at arms, and entered the chamber. The king had seated himself, and Robert de Baldock,

his chancellor, stood on his right hand; the other attendants were on the left. Despensers stood at a little distance surrounded by his guard. On the entrance of the armed knights, the chancellor, who was the mouth-piece of the king, now that his favourite was taken from him, addressed them.

“How is this, my Lord Marcher, that you attack your sovereign in his residence, and raise up against him that hand which he hath pressed at your homage; that you slaughter his liege subjects, and place under guard as felons and malefactors his friends and servants. How are ye advised to answer for these offences? for, by my faith, they appear to me no whit short of treason.”

“Good Master Baldock,” cried the marcher, scornfully, “hold thy speech, if thou would’st keep thy life. Thou art not now in thy place of office, nor is the king upon his throne. Prince Edward and the queen are marching against you with the whole country at their heels.”

“We fear not, our son,” said the king, mournfully; “it is our wife, Isabel, that we are most in dread of.”

“As God is my judge!” cried Aubrey, “it is such flattering villains as Despensers and thyself, De Baldock, who have brought King Edward to this sorry pass.”

“Thou do’st well,” cried Gloucester, proudly, “who art but a bastard, and the page of Mortimer, to rate thus men of noble lineage. Were I free, Marcel, thou wouldst not dare to blur mine honour.”

“Thou art a liar and a traitor, both!” cried the young knight, “and this I will prove against thee body to body. Thou art my prisoner, and I will but hold thee safe until thou art ready to do battle on this challenge.”

He drew off his mailed glove and threw it down; but the chancellor whispered the king, who forbade the earl to take it up. Baldock then proceeded.

“It can serve no end but that of evil; to aggravate this quarrel. The king is in distress, and must be indebted to some feal subjects for his restitution to that power and those rights which an unhappy fate hath deprived him of. To such valiant liegemen doubt not but he will be grateful. He hath no fears for the duty

of his son, who hath been seduced by the queen and her foul paramour, Lord Mortimer."

"Ha! Baldock," cried the poursuivant, "proceed further at thy peril. Thou art but a churchman, or I would defy thee to the death upon the innocence of Queen Isabel. She is but suspected in hearts black and spotted as thine own.

"We fear, Sir Knight," said the king, "our chancellor says no more than truth."

"By the Holy Virgin, my liege," returned the poursuivant, "he is a foul and calumnious liar. Would to God thou had'st never listened to him and that traitor, Despensers! thou wouldst now have been steadily seated on the throne of thy fathers."

The king shook his head. He was so wedded to his favourites, that impending ruin had not power to open his eyes to the folly of their conduct, which had caused his ill fortune. Edward, a man of a weak head and narrow capacity, was entirely governed by those to whom he was attached; the slave of their caprices,

and the tool of their ambition, he was more a puppet than a king; and, though he bore the ensigns of royalty, was wholly without authority or consideration. He was of a good presence, and at this time only forty-three years old; but the life of chagrin and disappointment which he had led from the commencement of his reign, had cast a cloud of sorrow over his features; and, though he had not sufficient penetration to discover the whole of his danger, (having no fears for his life, which his creatures assured him was too sacred to be assaulted by any rebels, however desperate,) he was yet melancholy at the depression and helplessness of his situation. He was clad, plainly, in black velvet, and his only ornament was a chaplet of pearls set around his hood, so that he seemed to have adopted that dress which was most consonant to his fortune and to the dreadful fate which afterwards befel him. After remaining silent a considerable time, he said, “And what is it, sirs, you would have us do? We are willing to follow any counsel that may redeem us from this ebb fortune.”

“Suffer me to speak one word in private to the king,” cried Gloucester.

“No, by St. Becket!” cried Aubrey, “thou shalt not, Despenser; the king hath given ear too long to thy pernicious counsel. Let him yield thee and thy herd of flatterers to the just indignation of the people, and throw himself into the arms of his son.”

“Would to God,” replied the favourite, “my death could restore him his crown; I would be the first to seek my own doom.”

“Believe it not, Hugh Despenser,” said the king; “thou should’st not suffer, though we lost our kingdom and our life.”

“Gramercy, Sir King,” cried Du Chalet, “I fear when Glo’ster shall be in the hands of the queen, your consent will be dispensed with.”

“Ha! St. Edward!” cried the King, bending his brow to the Plantagenet frown, which made him resemble his father; “who shall betray us to the queen? He shall abide our fortune, and be as harmless as ourselves.”

“ He is my prisoner, Sir King,” cried the poursuivant, “ and shall die the death. I would not ransom him for a queen’s dowry !”

“ Who art thou,” returned Edward, passionately, “ that dare contend with the power of a king? By the corse of my father, thou art but a traitor, and we will have thy head. Ap Gwyneth! seize him.”

“ You forget, my liege,” said the chancellor, “ that we are prisoners, and subject to the will of this baron and knight.”

“ Subject !” cried the king, enraged at the word, “ Subject! What! are we not within our own realm? Is there a greater man than ourselves in this company? I think thy name is Du Chatelet, and if it be, thou art our liegeman and vassal, and hast come a score times with thy hood in thy hand to bow thy knee before us. Whence comes it, then, thy knee is so stubborn now? We well remember thou holdest thy lands and title by the service of defending thy sovereign against his enemies, and of bearing his lance in war. Where be thy vassals now to beat back the queen and Mortimer? and where

thy lance to bear as our body-servant? By our lady! I think thou comest reasonably to make war upon us, in place of rendering thy proper service,”

“I am in doubt,” replied the marcher, “whether thou be’st king, indeed; for, when a king can no longer afford protection to his subjects, he forfeits their allegiance.”

“By St. Paul!” cried Baldock, “this is new doctrine, Sir Baron; then what head hath the kingdom, if he is no longer sovereign?”

“I know not,” answered Du Chatelet; “and I care as little. I am the head of my own vassals, and can uphold my power. Set a king on the throne of England, who can do the like, and I will speedily acknowledge him.”

“By the cross of St. Edward! Du Chatelet,” exclaimed Gloucester, “thine interest is sorted with the king’s. Set up thy banner for thy lawful sovereign, and he will now gird thee with the sword, and create thee Earl of March, a title aimed at by the rebel Mortimer.”

The blood flushed in the face of the

marcher; but he either doubted the sincerity of the proposal, or the king's ability to make the grant, or there were too many witnesses in the presence; for he made no reply. The favourite, supposing the offer did not reach the height of his ambition, and eager, by any means, to attain his liberty, continued, "Du Chatelet! name thine own terms; if an earldom will not content thee, choose what title may please thee, and the whole Welch border on the back of it, and the king shall grant both, so thou but remain staunch to our party."

"Hear ye this traitor!" exclaimed Aubrey, "who, if he had the power, would lavish away the whole kingdom to support his ruined faction. Despenser! is the border thine to give? or hast thou the three estates in thy single brain to do and undo after the fashion thou hast devised?"

"Marcel!" returned Gloucester, "thy fortune shall not be forgotten; thou art but a bachelor now; but thou shalt become one of the wealthiest barons of our isle by joining thy lawful sovereign."

“What !” cried the poursuivant, “would I become a caitiff of thy party, thou would'st dispossess some honest man of his land to enrich me withal? No, Despenser, I swear by the Holy Virgin! by the sun of Heaven! and by the beauty I worship, that were thy party that of honour and truth, I would fight for thee without a pin's fee; but, since I know thou art a false traitor, to fight under whose banner were lasting infamy, I tell thee plainly, whatever thou couldst offer, and thy sovereign perform, should not bribe me to link with thee. Thou art my prisoner; and, so help me in fight, St. George! as I deliver thee into the hands of the prince.”

“And thou, Du Chatelet!” said the favourite.

The marcher did not answer; but, turning to the king, said, “As we have won this fortress, it is time to depart. Come, Sir King, it is fit you accompany us,”

“Whither?” replied Edward, whose spirit seemed now quite broken.

“To my good Castle of Malpas!” returned the baron; “thou wilt be there in safety.”

“ Shall we ?” cried the king ; “ do’st thou, then, give us this assurance ?”

“ Thou shalt, indeed, be safe, Sir King,” replied Du Chatelet ; “ I pledge ye my knightly word.”

“ And our chamberlain, and our chancellor, and all our attendants ?” continued the monarch.

“ My Lord of Glo’ster,” returned the marcher, “ is the captive of Sir Aubrey Marcel ; for he was found armed and ready for resistance. I have no power over him, and no inclination to interfere between him and his master.”

“ But we ride together ?” said the king.

“ Ay, my lord,” answered Du Chatelet, “ if it so please ye.”

“ It doth please us, Sir baron,” cried Edward, “ if it do not give offence to yourself or friends. Beshrew me, but we thank ye for your courtesy.”

The baron then ordered the retainers of Ap Gwyneth to be collected in the courtyard, where the men at arms and others of the garrison were ransomed and discharged. He appointed a garrison of his

own vassals, (six score spears, and three hundred bowmen and archers) and set over them as constable, or castellan, the man at arms, Guisebert Hay. These appointments being concluded, the whole company prepared to depart. The king and his attendants were mounted on the palfreys of the Welsh chieftain, which were found within the castle, and with Sir Price, who rode his own courser of war, were stationed in the midst of three hundred men at arms, but particularly environed by Du Chatelet, Sir Aubrey Marcel, and Fierabras. This division went foremost, and was followed by the rest of the array. They advanced slowly across the river and the border, and it was nightfall before they began to ascend the hill upon which Malpas stood. When they arrived within a few bow-shots of the town, the constable rode forward, and the gate was thrown open, that their march might not be impeded. The king sighed heavily as he passed the portal, and cast a longing look upon the waste which they had passed. The cavalcade proceeded through the town and over

the draw-bridge of the castle, which was down for their reception, into the court yard. The baron and Sir Aubrey then dismounted, and, assisting the king to alight, conducted him with his attendants and the Welsh knight into the fortress.

“ I bid ye welcome, Sir King,” cried Du Chatelet, “ to my poor hall ; this is the first visit that royalty ever paid it.”

“ May it be the last,” replied the king, solemnly, “ if the visit be not paid out of better will than that wherewith we came hither ; but conduct us to our chamber, Sir Marcher, we would rest, for the ride hath tired us ; by our lady ! we have known the time, when we could have galloped the whole day in Beaulieu Forest to hunt the stag, without being wearied as much as with this short ride.”

“ The sadness of the heart, my liege,” said the chancellor, “ doth enfeeble the body, and bring upon us an early senescence.”

“ Ah ! Baldock,” cried Edward, in a voice tremulous and feeble with emotion, “ sorrow hath set her seal so long upon

us, that we have nigh forgotten the taste of happiness. A quiet old age, nay, death itself, is better than the green spring of youth when buckled to a mountain of troubles."

At this moment the king's eye caught the forms of Gloucester, Ap Gwyneth, and some others of his friends who were quitting the castle, to be put under a guard of Hainaulters, as the poursuivant's proper prisoners; Edward raised his hand, and cried, "Ha! where go ye, Despenser! Ap Gwyneth! hold, sirs! ye will not quit us who need your services?"

"They are my prisoners, my lord," replied Aubrey; "and they go to mine own quarters."

"They go! what! and we would have it otherwise?" cried the king, "we are your sovereign, Sirs, and command ye to stay."

The light of the torches, held by the domestics, fell upon the king's face, and shewed him strongly agitated with contending passion; rage, grief, and terror, were strangely mingled in his countenance, and seemed, in some degree, to

unsettle his understanding. He leaned upon the arm of a chair, and gasped for breath, continuing in a low tone, and by starts, "Thou art our chamberlain, Hugh Despenser, and we shall need thine assistance to unrobe; Ap Gwyneth will hold our basin and ewer; thou, Baldock, the napkin; come, Sirs, pray ye let us retire."

"They must leave ye, Sir King," cried Du Chatelet; "they are not my captives, and cannot remain in my fortress."

"Cannot remain in thy fortress, villain!" exclaimed the king, "by the rood of God ye are false knaves and traitors to your sovereign! — Cannot remain! ha! where is my father's power, that used to crush his enemies like the thunderbolt of heaven! Who durst have said to him, Thy friends cannot remain with thee? Holy Virgin! Mother of our Redeemer! have mercy on a persecuted king." He threw himself into the seat, and, covering his face with his hands, burst into tears and cried aloud. The marcher smiled in scorn; but the young poursuivant, differently affected, brought his prisoners

back to the king, and consented to suffer their attendance upon him. He did more; for he ransomed Sir Price ap Gwyneth on the spot, taking his word for payment, and that he would not bear arms until he was discharged.

The haughty Earl of Gloucester was softened by his generosity, and said, "Sir Aubrey, though thou art my fast foe, I shall ever hold thee a noble and true knight for thy present service."

"Despenser!" returned the pursuivant, "defile not me with thy praise; thy commendation is an infectious leprosy, and doth brand the victim with worse than death — with loss of honour. what I do, be sure on't, I do freely for the king, and not out of love to thee."

"I care not for thy motive," replied the favourite, "since it hath a loyal issue; and God speed me, if I live, as I requite thy courtesy."

"Were I on the brink of death," cried Aubrey, and thy hand might save me, I swear, by Holy Mary, I would not brook thy favour. Thou art mistaken, Despenser,

if thou thinkest I am to be bought by fair words."

"I never dreamt thou couldst, Sir Knight," replied Gloucester, scornfully, "for, despite thy shew and thy badge of love, I see thou art but a churl-bred sworder."

"Gramercy for thy gentility," replied Aubrey, "it will soon be shorter, by the head."

"Tout vient de Dieu," cried Gloucester, using the legend of a near kinsman. "I fear ye not, if I have fair play."

"As God may assoile my soul in his hallidome," replied the poursuivant, "I would free thee if I doubted thy having a fair trial. Thou art worthy the death; but I would have thee honestly dealt withal."

"Grace Dieu!" cried the king, "can he be tried fairly but by his peers? and can any, save ourselves, give orders for his execution?"

"Yea, so I have heard," replied Aubrey; "for when a king hath not the faculty to govern, a regent may be put in his place, who hath like powers as himself."

At this reply, Edward started from his seat, and, casting a look of horror upon the poursuivant, hastily quitted the hall, and was followed by his attendants.

The young bachelor then withdrew, attended by his Hainaulters, and returned to the monastery.

Our readers have yet to learn how the king and his attendants, who were supposed by the poursuivant and his friends to have been, by this time, in Ireland, were found at Caergwyneth, Sir Aubrey was as greatly astonished at this chance of fortune as could be well imagined, and studiously avoided any action in which he might be said personally to have committed violence on his sovereign. The nicety of his feelings, in this respect, made him the more willingly concede his leading in the expedition to the marcher, who was beset by no such scruples, and content himself with the mere acquisition of those prisoners whom he had won with his sword in fight. He even confessed, that upon reflection, he would rather have been

without Despensers, to whom he bore a mortal hatred, than have been an instrument whereby the king was made prisoner. But these floating clouds of regret soon vanished; the young bachelor being entirely ignorant of those murderous schemes which had been devised by the Queen and Mortimer, and which were not developed until the unfortunate monarch was put into their hands. Aubrey had ridden from Caergwyneth to Malpas by the side of Sir Price, with whom he held converse during their march. From him he learned, that a fortnight ago, he had received a message from his sovereign by a special harbinger, stating that he was then at the Abbey of Neith, in Glamorganshire, where he had been forced in his voyage to Ireland, to seek refuge from a storm which had befallen him at sea, and desiring that he would instantly summon his retainers, and give him conduct to his castle, which was conveniently seated for communication with those of his party in the north of England. He the rather confided his person to the keeping of his Welsh sub-

jects, because, being born at Caernarvon, he was, by the inhabitants of the principality, well beloved as their proper and native prince. Sir Price continued; that, upon the receipt of the summons, he had, as in duty he held himself bound, collected men at arms from all quarters; and, according to the king's instructions, advanced with a large force to the place of his retreat, whence he had conducted Edward, Gloucester, De Baldock, and a few others of his attendants to Caergwyneth, the king chusing to abandon the rest of his suite, to provide for their own safety. Edward expected that the whole principality would flock to him as he marched along, and that he should soon be in force sufficient to meet his wife and her foreign mercenaries. But this expectation had no foundation in reality. The Welsh cried "God save King Edward!" but suffered him to march on without offering any assistance. It was not until he had arrived at Caergwyneth, that he received any reinforcements, and then he was joined only by those needy men at arms, who, accustomed to make

war on the border, and having nothing but their personal liberty to lose, were in hopes of enriching themselves by a civil war carried on in the rich counties of England. The ill success of his dearest, and, indeed, only trust, dispelled the little courage which the king had gathered on his landing in Wales, and he gave way, notwithstanding the consolatory advice of his servants, to a bitter grief, and melancholy. He was incapable of regretting his past weakness; for he believed himself, and those attached to his fortunes, the only injured persons in the realm; and threw all the blame of his miscarriage upon his wife and her paramour, when in fact his ill fortune was in a great measure caused by his own imbecility, and the extravagance of his favourites. Edward, in the gratification of the Despensers, had no measure of prudence. Instead of dispensing, with an impartial hand, those advantages which, as sovereign, he had the disposition of, among his nobility according to their several merits and services, he drained himself of his demesnes and

treasures to lavish them upon two or three of his courtiers, who, when the storm arose, had no power to shield him against the indignation of his turbulent barons. It is testified by a record in the Tower, that the elder Despenser was possessed of fifty-nine manors, many thousand cattle of various descriptions; and in armour, plate, jewels, and hard cash, upwards of ten thousand pounds sterling, a sum for those days surprisingly great; and his whole wealth almost incredible for the possession of a subject. It is little wonder, then, that this ill-placed munificence should beget jealousies and murmurings among those who were aliens to his bounty; but many stratagems were tried to apprise him of their discontent at his partiality, before they broke out into open rebellion. Stowe, in his survey of London and Westminster, says that, "in the year 1316, Edward solemnized the feast of Pentecost in the great hall at Westminster, where, sitting royally at table with his peers about him, there entered a woman adorned like a minstrel, sitting on a great

horse, trapped as minstrels then used, who rode round about the tables, shewing pastime, and at length came up to the king's table, and laid before him a letter, and forthwith turning her horse, saluted every one and departed." The letter, being opened, had these contents.

"Our Sovereign Lord the King hath nothing courteously respected his knights, that in his father's time and also in his own, have put forth their persons to divers perils, and have utterly lost, or greatly diminished their substance, for honour of the said king; and he hath enriched abundantly such as have not borne the weight, as yet, of the business," &c.

Many other appliances (as our old authors relate), were used without effect. The king continued in his infatuation; and his favourites were too greedy of their present gains, and too confident in their present favour, to think of securing what they had already obtained by a prudent and circumspect conduct, or to apprehend any change of system by which their power or fortunes could be overturned. The example which the barons had given

them in the death of Piers Gaveston, seemed to be obliterated from their memories, or rather, it appeared, by their daring and contemptuous behaviour to those who opposed their faction, as if that example had never existed. But their disappointment, on the breaking out of this rebellion, was as bitter as their pride had been insufferable. The blow seemed at once to stun and terrify them. It rendered those who were once the dread and detestation of the whole land, naked, defenceless, and at the mercy of their insulting and contemptuous conquerors. Their fortunes fell more rapidly than they had risen ; and they who had imagined their foundations dug out of the eternal rock, found they had built their houses on the sand, which soon gave way, and buried them in the ruin.

CHAP. VIII.

A sompnour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fire-red cherubinne's face,
For sause fleme he was, with eyen narwe.
As hote he was and likerous as a sparwe,
With scalled browes, blake and pilled berd :
Of his visage children were sore aferd.

CHAUCER.

THE Red Squire having, at the command of his lord, stationed a strong guard at the door of the king's chamber, and provided for its necessary relief, left the castle, and went to Aprisidly's, for the purpose of visiting his mistress. As he entered the house he heard the voices of several men in high debate ; and by the frequent occurrence of Latin invocations, and what might be very properly termed ecclesiastical slang, he judged one of them to be a member of some religious order.

The mendicant friars of all times, since the foundation of their several societies, have, by their loose and unprincipled conduct, given a handle for complaint and reprobation. At this period,

they are characterized by several authors as idle, drunken, lascivious, and dishonest; ready to undertake any office, no matter how vile or unseemly, if by its execution they might gratify the inordinate sensuality of their appetites and desires. No hosterie, ale-house, or even brothel, was without its "lusty freer," who commonly enacted the part of jocular, or merryman, for the diversion of the company; and according to the brilliancy of his exploits, and the quaintness, perhaps indelicacy, of his anticks, obtained a larger or smaller modicum of pecuniary or bibulous remuneration.

We might here enter into a disquisition upon the causes of this profligacy; and certainly, a question might be raised, whether it was not the effect of their rules, which went far beyond those of Saint Benedict in strictness and severity. They were not only bound by the triple vow of poverty, chastity, and canonical obedience, but by other ties still more confined; as, for instance, the Carthusians ate no flesh, and on Fridays but bread and water; they took their diet

apart from the community, each friar in his own cell, and were served by a lay brother, who kept the key of each speleum. Speech was nigh a stranger among the order, the use of it being forbidden but on the most necessary occasions. The Grey Friars, or Friars Minors, the Carmelites, and the Black or Dominican Friars, had rules equally mortifying and preposterous. The fact seems to be, therefore, that their several founders, Bruno, Saint Francis, and Saint Dominick, appear to have possessed more piety than prudence, in attempting to establish an ascetic discipline in the midst of luxury and temptation. Had all the regularly religious preserved their cognomen of Unales, by remaining in the wilderness, instead of exchanging it for that of Ordo Cœnobitarum, which they acquired on the formation of monasteries, some few eremitæ, whose unsocial dispositions forbade an intercourse with mankind, might have passed an innocent, if useless, life in the desert ; but to imagine that they could transplant their misanthropy into the regions of com-

portable enjoyment, was to expect a miracle greater than any recorded by their latitudinarian historians. The friars were but men, notwithstanding their fastings and vigils, their stripes, hair-cloth shirts, and penitential mortifications; and it was very soon perceptible that the extremity of discipline had no other effect than that of disgusting its votaries, and rendering them eager for those gratifications which their regulations told them were illicit, pernicious, and damning to the soul. Besides, most of the friars were too ignorant of all kinds of learning to make any effectual inquiry into the reasonableness and utility of their institutions; they took every thing on credit, which bore the adoptional decrees of their founders, and having once broken through the pale of their duty, they believed they had attained the *ne plus ultra* of crime, and could deserve no further punishment by entering into the licentiousness and depravity of the laymen. They soon surpassed their penitents in all kinds of vice, and became eventually a sea-mark or beacon, held up

to the observation and avoidance of the different nations where they resided ; and at the time of their dissolution in England, (for which their profligacy was the apology,) we may see by the accounts, however highly charged, and maliciously exaggerated, that they were void of all temperance, sobriety, and chastity, and were given up to every species of vice contained in the catalogue of human wickedness. The Benedictines, and those who adhered to their rules, which were less austere, preserved a much better character. They were neither so profligate nor so ignorant as the friars ; and if they fall under our censure in any respect, it will be for their ambition, and the means they made use of to support their temporal power, and not for those low and base propensities which disgraced the mendicants, and dishonoured all ecclesiastical discipline. Moreover, "charity, which covers a multitude of sins," was the characteristic of the Black Monks. Thousands of paupers were fed daily, and clothed annually, at the porches of the greater monasteries, the

chief of which were of the order of St. Benedict; and although charitable donations were enjoined the friars by their regulations, they were much more commonly observed in the theory than in the practice. In short, that which is a sure test of the merits of the different orders, is observable, that on the dissolution of the smaller houses, consisting in a great measure of the friars, there was heard no murmur of dissatisfaction among the poorer kind of people; but on the abolition of the greater monasteries, the kingdom, from one end to the other, re-echoed with cries of distress and indignation; and it is to be believed that no monarch, save the despotic Henry, could have carried a point so fraught with danger to the safety of the state. Having premised thus much on the general order of mendicant friars, we shall return to Fierabras, and introduce our readers with him to a worthy member of the brotherhood.

The house of Aprisidly, like all other houses which did not belong to the gentry or nobility, was built of wood and

plaster, that is to say, a frame-work of wood, resembling the skeleton of a ship, or rather the bone of a herring, was first erected, the interstices whereof were interwoven with slight lath, and covered with white or yellow plaster; the wood-work, which was left uncovered, was painted black, and, contrasted with the white mortar of the other parts, had a pleasing effect: the top of the house, which was thatched with straw, had in it an opening or chimney, around which the ingenious hosteller had set up a sort of wooden funnel, with a small mouth, answerable to the brick and mortar chimneys of modern days. Indeed, the houses of the nobility and gentry had chimneys then, and we are, perhaps, doing Miles Aprisidly too much honour, by according to him the invention of this temporary convenience.

The fire-place within doors was in the midst of the house, and resembled the outline of a Roman camp. The fire itself, occupying a large hole or cockpit in the floor, answered the body of the camp tolerably well, and the black pot

which frequently hung over it, suspended by a chain from the roof, would have done for the prætorium; the upper part of the hole represented the interior vallum, and a space between the fire and the seats of the guests, had no bad similitude to the fosse or ditch, more especially when it was flooded with ale or metheglin; the settles or benches which surrounded the fire, (except at two intervals forming the portæ,) composed the outer vallum, and here you have the camp complete. The intervals, or portæ, call them which you please, were used for the egress and regress of the Huscarles belonging to Aprisidly, in their culinary avocations. As it was dark night when Fierabras entered the house, the fire had newly been replenished with thick logs of seasoned wood, which blazed and crackled away, to the great comfort and enjoyment of the assembled guests. The principal personage among them was the friar; he was of that order termed Freres Pies, from the magpie diversity of their garments, which were black and white; but, in addition to his

woollen coat, hempen girdle, and unshod feet, he had the scalloped hat, staff and scrip of a pilgrim, with a great quantity of ugly and mis-shapen crosses of white cloth sewed upon his garment. His age was about forty; and although he was not, like his host, tun-bellied and rosy, yet his countenance shewed good living, a light heart, and careless disposition; his eye, bright and wandering, followed Joan at every step, and the ardency of his gaze well confessed he had long since dismissed his vow of chastity. The next person with whom we wish to bring our readers acquainted, was Alan Waldeyff, granger or farm-keeper to the abbey of Malpas. He was a tall and stout yeoman of thirty, clad in a jerkin and hose of blue russet, with a long pavade or dagger in his belt, and two keys, crosswise, embroidered on his collar, as a badge of his being the church's retainer. He was shrewd and bold; and was well esteemed by his masters, the monks, for his honesty and fidelity. The third person in importance was the minstrel, Oliver Blondel, who, instead of riding with

the throng to the castle, had proceeded alone to Aprisidly's, and so arrived before the constable. There were several other guests, who being chiefly rustics, or Hainault men at arms quartered on the hosterie, were not of sufficient importance to merit peculiar enumeration in these pages; but we must not omit to inform our readers, that Aprisidly himself, as well as his daughter, were present. The subject of their conversation was the capture of the king and Despen-ser; news of which event had been brought to the inn by some of the horsemen who had ridden forward with the Red Squire; but their information was doubted until the arrival of Blondel, who confirmed it. This intelligence, as it was likely, produced a strong ferment in their minds, and they were anxiously discussing the probable intentions of the captors in relation to their royal prisoner, when the entrance of the Red Squire caused them to put an end to their investigation.

Jannequin bowed to the friar as he entered, (who returned his courtesy with a hypocritical "Deus vobiscum!") and

passed on to Joan, who sat behind the settles talking to Blondel and her father.

“What!” cried Fierabras, when he saw the minstrel, “art thou here before me? Think not I am a laggard, fair Joan—a silken tunic is lighter to carry than iron harness.”

“I’ faith,” returned Joan, “you made light enow of your harness yester morn, or you are belied, Sir Constable.”

The Red Squire looked sternly at the minstrel, and then, assuming a smile, said to Joan,—“Who told ye this, fair mistress? By my soul! I feel how much I am his debtor; and I would, for payment, he were in strait as dangerous. With my own lance bare I down fifteen horsemen; but what could the courage of Sir Roland ’vantage him against a host?”

This sally of the Gascon’s produced such an effect upon all present, that they entertained themselves heartily at his expense; especially Blondel, who, tickled more than usual at the effrontery of Fierabras, laughed with such zest as mightily enraged his rival.

“Is there any man here,” bellowed

the Red Squire, "who dare affirm the contrary? If there be, I say he is a liar, and there is my glove."

He threw down his gauntlet, but this action only increased the mirth of the company, and Blondel was obliged to throw himself on a seat and hold his sides. The friar then advanced, and taking up the glove, offered it to the constable, saying, "En le nom de la Virgine Marie, take thy glove, son; for thou seest no one is disposed to accept thy challenge; and if there might be found a wight so hardy, this is not the time nor the place for battle. Thou wilt affright this precious damsel, and if we should lose her company through thy squabbling, I would myself crack thy costard for the disappointment."

"God a' mercy, Sir Friar!" replied Jannequin, "I should wish no better sport. I care not that," snapping his fingers, "for thy cuffs or thy prayers; and if thou wilt have a bout, I will give thee as good as thou dost bring."

"Sir Constable," said the minstrel,

laughing, "there is an old rhythm, which says,

He that challenges the town,
May sometimes catch a bloody crown."

"A pize on thee, and thy rhythms to boot," cried the Gascon fiercely. "Besshrew my heart! but I think thou art a double-dealing knave, that showest fair weather to my face, and foul to my back. What! it was thou who didst me the service of telling that cursed mishap on Bangor bridge to the whole country; and dost now give me caution as a scoff and jeer? Thou that knowest so well to give advice, look to it thyself."

"What!—Dost thou threaten?" returned the minstrel; "I know of nought which should bind me to seek thy good will, or care for thine anger. 'Tis true I did tell Miles thou wast repulsed on Bangor March."

"Thou didst!" cried Jannequin, his eyes flashing fire. "Thou didst proclaim me beaten!—This, Sir Herald, is for thy reward."—

He drew his basillard, and rushed upon the minstrel; Joan shrieked, and flew towards them; her father called aloud; but the harper would have fallen beneath the Gascon's dagger, had not his arm been arrested by the stalwart grasp of Alan Waldeyff. The constable strove in vain to free himself; his strength was no match for that of the yeoman, who clutch'd him as a falcon does his smaller prey.

“Hold off, Waldeyff!” cried the Red Squire; “hold off, or by Saint Denis, I will make thy heart's blood purple my dagger-blade.”

“Thou shalt make nobody's blood purple thy dagger-blade, false Frenchman!” returned the granger; “I have thee fast, and I will keep thee so, unless thou wilt swear peace on thy dagger-cross.”

“Hold!” cried the friar, fumbling in his scrip, “I have here quædam pars de cruce, in qua—in qua—that is to say, a piece of the holy cross, whereon our Redeemer was crucified. Let him swear on this relic, and if he should break his

oath, he will be condemned in purgatory *usque in diem judicii cruciandus.*”

He produced a piece of wood, which, so far from being in any way distinctive, or capable of identification, was without the general marks of antiquity. In lieu of having that worm-eaten and mouldering appearance, which one would have supposed the revolution of twelve centuries must have given it, had the relic been veritable, it seemed of wood newly cut, and splintered in some few places for the purpose of aiding the deception. The friar, however, was not singular in his antiquarianism: many of the monasteries assured their votaries that they held such and such relics, the actual possession of which was warmly disputed by at least some dozens of other religious houses. Thus the leg of St. John the Baptist, the milk of the Blessed Virgin, the beard of Saint Anthony, and many other relics equally precious and authenticated, were shown in at least twenty houses in England, and in five hundred throughout Christendom. But to return to our friar. He held forth the pretended

relic, upon which Waldeyff insisted the constable should swear before he would set him at liberty ; but Fierabras utterly rejected the oath. “ To the devil with your mummary ! ” cried he ; “ that is as much the wood of the true cross, as I am Saint Peter, or his Holiness the Pope.”

“ Bah ! ” ejaculated the friar ; “ it had better be counterfeit, than that thou shouldst blaspheme.”

“ I will make thee a hundred such ! ” cried Jannequin, laughing, “ out of the next stave I splinter ; but come, Alan ! hold off thy hand — there is no need I should use the friar’s relic, for in cool blood I will drink the minstrel’s health.”

“ Ay, pax inter omnes,” cried the friar ! by Saint Barnaby and Saint Francis son, thou hast some wit, tho’ it be hid in a bushel.”

Aprisidly produced some wine, the granger released the constable, and harmony was restored. Fierabras pledged Blondel in a full cup, and the minstrel returned his compliment. The friar was

not backward, but poured a libation to the goddess of concord, not, according to the ancient custom, on the ground, but down his own throat. In short they were set in (as the phrase is) for a regular debauch. A clumsy three-legged table was stationed before the settle, upon which the hosteller placed a flagon of Gascony wine, and several horn cups. Jannequin filled his, and cried "Health to thee, Joan! and next, to my noble lord, Bertrand du Chatelet;" after emptying his cup he continued, "By Saint Denis, a fair wind should have carried me back to France, but I trow there is now better work in hand. The days of spoil, of pelfry, and ransom are beginning, my jolly boys; and I shall hold him no good man at arms that does not gather a sack full of gold, my bonny Joan! I promise thee a score yards of Rennes stuff for thy shirting, or I will buy thee a taffeta kirtle, and a velvet aulmoner pranked out with silver, for thy holiday girdle."

"Thou mayest spare thy coin, Sir Constable," replied Joan: "gold so won

doth never better the winner, and I will none on't."

"Marry, Sir Constable!" cried the friar, "the church is not touched with such nicety of conscience:—thou wilt do well to buy the intercession of Saint Francis by the application of some of thy treasure to the wants of his votaries."

"Buy!" ejaculated the granger; "is Saint Francis one of your pardoners, Sir Friar, hawking his good offices the whole country round? By our Lady! were it not that I owe duty to the good brethren of Malpas, I would say, No offering no priest;—ye are sellers all."

"Good knight of the blue jerkin," cried the friar, "let not thy tongue wag rudely against thy betters; thou knowest not the fastings, the prayings, and the mortifications which we of the priesthood do undergo."

"No; by my faith," cried Aprisidly, "he were a wise man, Sir Friar, that did. If good eating, fine wines, and no labour may make out the list of your penances, then are ye the most mortified bodies in life."

“ Miles Aprisidly,” said the mendicant, with an affected calmness, “if that be thy name, doest thou think the hard life of a mendicant friar so enviable? Thou hast but given us the picture of the fat and lazy Benedictines of thine own abbey; far different is the life of a Franciscan, who is really that poor and humble being but known to the monks by profession; seest thou this coat of coarsest wool, this girdle of common hemp, these bare feet, cut by the rugged stones, and this scrip void of aught —”

“ Save the dram flask, which is peeping out to give ye the lie,” interrupted the granger.

“ The flask is empty, and did contain but pure water from the fountain!” returned the friar. “ I say, brethren, do ye note these badges of misery, and yet esteem our order an enviable profession? I speak not of the breaches in our rest for laudes and prime, of our open scourgings, our secret penances, our labour, study, and pilgrimages.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha !” cried Waldeyff, “ labour, study, and pilgrimages !”

“ By the rood of Malpas,” cried the friar, “ I wend homeward now from a pilgrimage to Saint John of Beverley in Yorkshire.”

“ Thou didst know of some fair wench by the way then, Sir Friar,” cried the Red Squire; “ and so thou didst visit thy two saints at once, two birds with a stone, eh, Sir Mendicant! I marked thine eyes hawking after Joan; but see thou seek not to confess her, or I will shave the remnant of thy crown with my basillard.”

“ Thou mightest find thyself matched,” replied the friar; “ for though I wear a woollen gown, and a hazel rosary, I can handle this staff of mine as well as thou canst do lance and sword.”

“ Well said, friar!” cried Waldeyff, “ thou art a true English blood, I’ll be sworn.”

The granger, who was somewhat fuddled, accompanied his commendation with a hearty clap on the shoulder, which piece of familiarity did by no means gratify the mendicant, who replied,

“ And I’ll be sworn thou art an uncourteous companion; thy masters,

granger, might have taught thee better manners than thus to handle a holy friar."

"Gramercy, Sir Priest!" returned Alan, "I meant thee no wrong,—the blow might be somewhat heavy, for the hand of an English yeoman is none of the lightest; but thou knowest it is our fashion to draw a good bow, and play at sword and buckler, rather than prison our breath and limbs in your mincing daintihood."

"By Saint Francis! I would they were imprisoned in the pillory or stocks," cried the mendicant, "an' thou dost not know the way to use them."

"Try me, thou gossiping priest!" replied Waldeyff, "by our Lady! I have carried a jack-ass on my shoulders before now; and if thou wilt, I will do so again."

"Thou art a saucy churl," cried the friar, lending him a blow across the shoulders with his pilgrim staff; the yeoman started up, on feeling the thwack of the mendicant, and, grasping him in his arms, threatened to throw him on the

fire ; but, at length, by the intercession of the minstrel, for whom Alan had a particular respect, he allowed the friar his liberty, who, so soon as he had his foot on the ground, fixed his staff as a centre, and began to dance around it, resembling in appearance the figure of a bear and ragged staff, the Warwick cognizance. The granger joined him, whilst some of the rustics, who were present, beat time on the settle with their oaken cudgels. Aprisidly endeavoured, in vain, to put an end to their foolery, but Waldeyff hustling him on one side, cried out, “ now minstrel, strike up — give us a tittera-lara, my lad of wax. Come Joan, wilt thou not shake thy petticoats, wench, and shew thy brodered stockings ?

“ Ay, that shall she,” cried the friar, running up to the damsel, and seizing her by the hand. “ By our Lady, sweet wench, I would fain foot it with thee.”

“ By our Lady,” cried the Red Squire, rising from his seat and pushing the mendicant back, “ thou shalt not foot it with her, Sir Friar, — she can shew off her kirtle

and hose without thy assistance, or the devil's in it."

"And what right hast thou to say me nay," replied the friar, "when the maiden doth not refuse? By my faith! 'stead of calling thyself the Red Squire, thou shouldest be called the green, or the yellow, for thou art a jealous-pated booby."

"It is not seemly the girl should dance!" said her father: "this is no May-game nor morris-day."

"I will abide the judgment of the minstrel," cried the arch damsel: "he is the soberest of your company. — What sayest thou, Oliver Blondel; should I dance or no?"

"I answer no," replied Blondel; "thy father has given reasons good enough."

The constable shook him by the hand for this decision in his favour; and as the friar could not obtain the partner he wished for, he not only gave up dancing, but sullenly quitted the hall. Shortly after the company broke up, and each man retired to his lodgings.

CHAP. IX.

Oh! 'twould have done thy heart good, to behold
The gorgeous trappings and magnificence,
The blazon'd banners, sky-kissing pennons,
And rich banderoles that flaunted in the air!
Knights, with their lances raised aloft to heaven,
Like a thick wood of stately mountain-pines,
Moved in slow order at the trumpet's sound;
Whilst yeomen, and the throng of gay spectators,
Gave life and motion to the dazzling scene.

Joan of Arc.

EARLY on the morning following the arrival of the king at Malpas, a herald appeared at the gate and demanded instant conduct to the Baron du Chatelet. He bore upon his tabard the arms of the Earl of Lancaster, the king's cousin; and as he seemed by his look of bustle and hurry to be on some errand of importance, he was admitted without delay. When brought into the presence of Sir Bertrand, who was still a-bed, he informed him that the Earl, journeying southward to meet the queen, had stop-

ped to rest at the abbey of Combermere, (distant some half-dozen miles from Malpas,) where he had first been made acquainted with the capture of Edward, and his attendants; that it was his wish to see the king, and, if not disagreeable to the baron, he would advance to the castle on his (the herald's) return. Du Chatelet accorded his consent, conditioned only that the earl's attendants should not exceed a score of armed men; and with this answer the herald quitted him. He proceeded to the abbey and requested admission to the lord abbot, to whom he delivered his master's compliments, and craved a lodging for himself and twenty knights. Sir Aubrey, who was present at his reception, instantly armed himself and fifty of his lances, with whom he set out for Combermere attended by the herald. The earl had, during his residence abroad with the queen and prince, much befriended the bachelor, who looked up to him as a kind of patron, and intended to place his prisoner Gloucester, at his disposal.

Henry of Lancaster, son of that earl

condemned and executed through the inveterate hatred of the Despensers, and the weakness of the king, was a nobleman not only of great and honourable estate, but of high personal character. He was brave, generous, prudent, and humane, a man of honour in the true sense of the word, and inimical to all those who preferred their own private and selfish ambition to the good weal and glory of their country. He was upon principle, as well as duty to the manes of his father, the avowed enemy of the Despensers, and was more than any other by them dreaded and detested. His probity was so universally established, that the queen and her gallant Mortimer thought it unadvisable to trust him with their schemes, deep as were the injuries his family had suffered from the king ; and a reference to the ancient and more particular historians will demonstrate that he was held aloof from their cabals, and was considered as the friend of the young prince, rather than the co-adjutor of his infamous mother. Nay, when the king himself had been deposed

by the concurrent resolutions of all the estates, and was placed in the earl's hands as in sure keeping; though he of all men had cause to remember the king's bad government, yet, acting upon the true feelings of a Christian, he forgot his injuries in the misfortunes of the monarch, and treated him with an honourable attention, a tenderness, and humanity, as admirable in himself, as it was mortifying and undesirable to Isabel and Mortimer. They, as our readers are well acquainted, removed Edward to Berkeley Castle, where he met that horrid fate which has had no parallel in the annals of murder.

When Du Chatelet arose, which he did on the departure of the herald, he gave orders to his constable to have the garrison completely armed and drawn out. On all occasions of ceremony, armour was the state, if not court dress, and Sir Bertrand wished to do honour to so great a man as the Earl of Lancaster. The ramparts of the castle and the parapet and barbicans of the town were manned with archers and crossbow-men, whilst

one-half of the men at arms formed a guard of honour on horseback, the remaining moiety being stationed on foot within the hall of the castle and the courtyard. The baron himself, who was alone unarmed, wore a rich tunic and hose of tawney-coloured velvet, gaily embroidered with gold, Spanish boots of buff leather, and a state-mantle of crimson damask, furred with large squares of vair, and purfled with honobles or rows of minuevair on the cape: the rest of his equipments were befitting his rank. He had scarcely descended from his chamber, when the abbot and Sir Paschal made their appearance in the hall, robed and attended as befitted them when attending the court of a king. To do the abbot justice, it must be confessed, that it was his wish, by shewing the fallen monarch all honour and countenance, to alleviate the sense of his misfortunes; and he, therefore, appeared before him in equal state as if he had still been at liberty, and in the government of his kingdom. Our readers will, we trust, pardon us for being particular in our

description of the several habits and equipages of our personages. We shall do our endeavour to set before them the true glass and fashion of the time; and hope to draw upon ourselves no scorn from the antiquary; and yet give some amusement to those, who, though unacquainted with the foppery of their ancestors, are fond of observing the mutations of dandyism in all its exuberances. Moreover, the dresses of the inferior clergy, of the yoemen and perdings, (or men of no substance, as they are termed, *legibus H. I. cap. 29.*) and which cannot be brought within the charge of fantastical dressing, do yet deserve some particular notice, insomuch as they illustrate the fashions of our plebeian forefathers, to those who have not the time or the inclination to seek them in original authors. We make this apology once for all, and we expect that it will not be carped at but by those who are masters of all antiquarian learning.

The abbot was clothed in an upper garment of rich purple velvet, called a dalmatick, having beneath it a white

silken tunic, the sleeves of which were close to the arm and fastened by jewelled buttons at the wrists ; his shoes were of the same velvet as his dalmatick ; and on his head he wore his costly mitre ; his hands were graced with the ring and gloves ; and his silver crosier, richly adorned with jewels, was borne by an ecclesiastical officer especially appointed for that service. He was also attended by two other monks, one bearing his cross, the rood of which was pure gold ; and the other the banner of the abbey, (gules, with two keys en sautoir, the device of St. Peter.) His whole state was magnificent beyond description, and must have been witnessed, to produce an adequate admiration. His brother, Sir Paschal Marcel, who was a civil (or Norman) lawyer of great renown in his profession, wore, (like a sergeant of common law) a party-coloured robe of diaper, with a girdle of samytte adorned with bars or stripes of gold, and a coif of white silk which covered the tonsure of his head. He was also attended by his retainer, clad in a burnet-coloured livery,

with his master's badge or cognizance, embroidered on the breast and back of his tunic.

It was near mid-day when the preparations for receiving the earl were completed. The king and his attendants still kept their chamber, being there supplied with refreshments by the baron's domestics. The coming of the Earl of Lancaster to visit the king, was soon noised through the town, and the inhabitants and rustics of the adjoining country appeared at the tilt-yard dressed in their holiday equipments long before the arrival of the cavalcade. Joan Aprisidly, as usual, had the best place of observation on the castle parapet, much to the envy and dissatisfaction of her less fair compeers. She was attended by the minstrel, the pied friar, and her father; and was shortly joined by the granger Waldeyff. The guard of honour, composed of half of Aubrey's company of Hainaulters, and one hundred and fifty English lances, rode without intermission, between the great gate of the town and the tilt-yard. All was bustle and ani-

mation. Here a troop of lances, with tabards of the baron's arms worn over their complete mail, moved at a footpace from one end of the lists to the other: there a body of Hainault spears, with armour of bright plate, resembling the scales on a dragon's back, rode at a sharp trot, or curveted from side to side displaying their horsemanship. In one place a company of English yoemen, clad in their polished brigandines, with hose and sleeves of mail, each man holding a mighty bow, stood in a circle discussing their favourite exercise, archery; whilst a crowd of crossbow-men, guarding the postern, were equally engaged upon the superiority of their weapon over that of the long-bow. The Red Squire, the constables of the men at arms, the centenaries and vintenars of the infantry were seen hurrying about in various directions giving orders or countermanding them. Trumpets and horns astounded the welkin; drums beat, (laugh not, ye critics, drums were used long before this era,) and every thing bore an appearance as

fascinating to the eye of the females and young soldiers of that age, as does, at this day, a review of a regiment of hussars or lancers, before the sovereign on Hounslow Heath, to crowds of elegant and admiring spectators. "Look at those men at arms," said the minstrel; "saw ye ever a sight so gallant? How erect they bear their tall lances, like a grove of young cedars! How stately each man bestrides his steed, and their coursers, how they paw the ground and snuff the air, as though they disdained the earth they tread on."

"Men at arms, quotha!" cried Waldeyff, "dost see those bold yeomen, with their elke bows, and arrows of a good cloth-yard? those are the lads for service. — What say'st thou Miles? thou should'st know somewhat of the matter. — What made the Scots run at Falkirk, my old cock? Was it not the yeomen's bows? answer me that."

"By St. Hubert," replied Aprisidly, who had been an archer himself, "thou hast hit the mark, Alan. — It was the English yeomanry won that day; for the

chivalry struck never a stroke till the field was gained."

"Ha, St. Francis!" cried the friar, "bad I wis are both lance and bow; but worse weapon a thousand times is the murderous cross-bow."

"Pish!" returned the granger, drawing up his nose scornfully, "a child's weapon — fit only to shoot crows, or at a mark."

"It is worth naught in a challenged field," continued Aprisidly, "but may be useful in assaulting a town."

"By our Lady," cried the friar, "it was prohibited by an ecclesiastical council, as a most damnable weapon, invented by the devil in his enmity to mankind; but was revived by Cœur de Lion in his crusade against the Saracens."

"I tell thee, Sir Friar," cried the granger, "that the English bow, both at Cyprus and Ascalon, did more execution than the whole of the chivalry. I have heard it from the sons of those who were present; but when heard ye aught of the cross-bow?"

"When heard I?" returned the men-

dicant, "cans't thou suppose the weapon would have been condemned by a public council, had not the fathers found it more deadly and murderous than any other in use?"

"The fathers were fools," cried Waldeyff unceremoniously.

"And do not those who use it," cried the friar, "shoot not only darts and arrows, but also leaden bolts and quarrels of iron, big enough to cleave a man in twain?"

"A man!" cried Waldeyff, "ay, such a man as thou art — a goose's feather would do it — but I would thou had'st an ashen shaft quivering in thy liver, — thou would'st then learn the difference, old burly head."

The minstrel perceiving this dispute, if allowed to continue, would produce ill consequences, interrupted the controversialists, by remarking how well the Red Squire managed his horse, and how gracefully he bore his lance.

"Which is he? Which is he?" cried the friar.

"Seest thou not yon horseman," re-

plied Aprisidly, “ with a crimson tabard over his mail ? The arms of the baron are worked on the breast in gold, and he rides a bright bay courser, barbed with a demi-chamfrein — there, now he rides at speed — see, he gallops towards the town — he waves his arm — hark ! (after a short pause,) he cries the Earl is at the gate.”

A loud murmur ran through the crowd of rustics who surrounded the barriers of the tilt-yard. The constables of the men at arms formed them in two lines, one on each side of the lists; whilst the infantry were also drawn up in two battles or squadrons at the upper and lower ends of the ground. The sound of the trumpet announced the advance of the earl and his party; and, in a few minutes, they entered the tilt-yard in the following order : first came the pennon-bearers of Sir Aubrey Marcel, followed by twenty-five Hainault spears; next the earl’s marshal, bearing his banner of red sarcel, with his arms emblazoned thereon; and he was followed by ten knights clad in complete mail, belonging to the earl’s

household. The earl himself rode next, accompanied by Sir Aubrey Marcel and another knight. As a prince of the blood, Lancaster was habited in a surcoat or supertunic of purple velvet, lined with ermine, and enriched with leopards of gold; his hosen were of the same stuff; and on his head he wore a round cap, called a pileus, or cap of state, being made of velvet, as his habit, with a jewelled button in front, and a gold tassel depending from the crown. He was at this time a young man; but there was in his air and carriage so much majesty and command, that he inspired the boldest with awe and the proudest with respect. Our readers are acquainted with the bearing and equipage of Sir Aubrey Marcel; we shall therefore pass to the description of the other knight who attended the earl.

He was apparently about five-and-twenty or thirty years of age, with a countenance which would have been remarkably handsome, had it not been prejudiced by a cast of effeminate foppery, which pervaded the whole person. He

was clad in plate, or jointed armour, which began about this time to be worn in France, of which country he was a native: it consisted of a cuirass of bright steel or iron, which defended his body, as did the gorget or halleret his neck, and the pouldrons, brassarts, and gauntlets, all of plate, his shoulders, arms, and hands; he had also a garde de reins, together with cuissarts for his thighs, and greaves or steel boots, for his legs and feet; on his heels he wore the gilt spurs of knight-hood, which, instead of having only one point, as hitherto used, (and whence the spur was called a pryck) had an enormous rouelle or radiated wheel, six inches in diameter. His horse, a milk-white courser, was barbed in the same fashion, having a chamfrein of bright steel upon his head, with another covering for his neck, called a criniere, composed of a number of small plates, connected together and hooked to the chamfrein; he had also a poitrinal for his breast, with a croupiere and flancois for his hind quarters and flanks. His body-armour, (or at least so much of it as could be seen beneath

his quartelois, which was of scarlet damask, starred with gold, and embroidered with his arms) was richly decorated with chasing, gilding, bosses and rivets of gold; and the several pieces composing the barb of his horse were gaily adorned with foliage and other ornaments. He had two squires of the body in attendance upon him, one of whom bore his burgonet visored, beavered, and crested with a rich plume of white feathers; the other squire carried his lance, which was fluted, and guarded like a tilting-spear, with a vamplate of iron, to preserve his hand against the shock in time of action; the lance was painted with stripes of divers colours along the flutes, and ornamented with a silken pensil or banderole attached to the head of the shaft. The only weapons he wore on his person were a rencontre sword, or sword of arms, on his left side, and a small dagger, called the misericorde, or dagger of mercy, on his right. At his saddle bow hung a mace of damascene work, with the shaft or handle plated with silver. His squires were clad as the other men at arms, ex-

cept that they wore burgonets, instead of the bacinets and cylindrical helmets used by the English and Hainaulters. To this armeret and his squires, succeeded ten other knights of the earl's household; and the rear was brought up by the remaining division of Hainaulters. As they rode slowly, it was some time before the entire cavalcade had entered the tilt-yard, and the populace had full leisure and opportunity to scrutinize their appearance. So much splendour could not fail to raise their curiosity and admiration, and they testified their delight by loud shouts of applause and busy murmurs of approbation. Above all, the female part of the spectators appeared to be greatly taken with the novel and elegant appearance of the French knight, who, indeed, ingrossed more of the public attention than did the earl himself. Lancaster was engaged in a conversation with Sir Aubrey Marcel, which, from his paying little attention to the surrounding scene, was, doubtless, of considerable interest; whilst the Frenchman, who appeared to fancy nothing interesting but what re-

lated to his own figure, sat silent on his courser, intent upon keeping a handsome seat, and shewing off to the greatest advantage. The eager gaze of the people, and of the women particularly, seemed to give him much pleasure, though he was doubtless a gallant of too high nurture to manifest any exterior marks of gratification more than those of giving himself an air of superior state, and applying the rouelles of his spurs to the flank of his courser, causing him to curvet and amble.

“Eh, sirs,” cried Joan, “look at that gay knight; there’s a bird of feather for ye!”

“Ay, Joan,” returned the granger, “by my troth, he seems to have meikle more feather than pluck.”

“My stars!” continued the damsel, “what a fine Talbot! how pranked and beglozied with gold! and his cap, black velvet, as I live! and posied with jewels! See how his plume flaunts it in the air! as who should say, saw ye ever the like?”

“Ha! ha! ha!” cried Aprisidly, “what the devil has he got on his heels? They

are like the round ends of our fire and-irons, save that the one are iron and the other gold, I trow."

"They are the new-fashioned spurs!" replied Oliver Blondel! "but this galand is extravagant in his fashion. I fancy he is some foreigner of high breeding; for this is the first suit of jointed armour I have yet seen, though I have heard it spoken of by travelled men. He is, in sooth, a handsome man."

"Ay," cried Waldeyff; "but he is no peer to the young bachelor, Aubrey Marcel. His face is spoiled by his foppery; whilst Marcel is just as God made him. The Frenchman, for I trow he is one, is armed like a dainty minion; but the poursuivant, as he calls himself, is both handsome, gaily harnessed, and a bold venturer, to the boot."

"Ay, ay," returned Joan; "but mark ye his beautiful hair? In how many croks it curls around his forehead beneath his cap."

"'Slife!" cried her father, "thou dost praise this knight, Joan, for his very foppery. He durst not wear his helmet, lest,

forsooth, it should spoil his braided locks. But look at Sir Aubrey ; he has his bacinnet on his head, and has no need to give a thank-ye to his squire for bearing it ; and, look at the Frenchman's lance, painted with as many colours as a maying pole. By our Lady of Malpas, he would make a proper jester, or lord of of misrule."

"Fie on ye," cried his daughter, "to give such silly names to a worshipful knight, and a handsome. He may be both stout and wise, for aught ye know to his disfavour."

"Stout he may be," said the friar, "though there seems more of shew than substance under that gay bliaut ; but wise he is not, since he doth contravene the ordinances and anathemas of holy church in wearing those vile and harlotry croks upon his head. Hair after that fashion is fit only for such pretty wenches as thou art, fair Joan ; and I would have all men set in the carcan, or tumbrel, who dare possess themselves of womanly ornaments and appendages. What sayest thou, Sir Minstrel?"

“ I will only say,” replied Blondel, “ that the Lord Henry of Lancaster is the pink of nobility and of knighthood. Observe his dress, how magnificent, and yet how plain ! No plume of feathers to his cap—no croks around his head—no honobles of fur to puff out his shoulders, and give them a false breadth ; his Spanish boots, ye see, are not snouted and chained ; and he wears the old Saxon spur, after the fashion of his forefathers. Give me such a knight before a hundred thousand such minions as his companion ; but, stop, they halt ; and, see, the baron appears to receive them.”

“ By our Lady !” cried the friar, “ the baron is somewhat dainty in his own person.”

“ Keep thy clapper still, friar,” cried Aprisidly ; “ if thou canst say no good of our lord, I am his homager, and must hear nought ill of him.”

“ Eheu, Domine !” cried the friar, “ the priesthood is privileged to speak freely.”

“ So may ye in your cells,” returned the hosteller, “ and no one may scathe

ye ; but priest nor layman shall blur him I serve whilst I have power to forbid it."

"Now they alight," said the minstrel ;
"with what state the baron bids them welcome!"

"And see," cried Joan, "how gracefully the young knight doffs his cap! What a fine shape and figure is he! With what an air he bows to the baron? and now, how carelessly he claps his cap on the crown of his head! Ha! by my truly, he looks this way."

The damsel blushed to her finger ends; whilst Blondel, who was somewhat alarmed at the excess of her admiration, regarded her with a look of serious mortification. Her father, also, was much chagrined at the liveliness of her disposition, which seemed to prefer dress and splendid extravagance to worth and honour divested of those adventitious ornaments. The minstrel did not speak, though it appeared, from the agitation of his countenance, that he was much moved; but her father rated her soundly for her ill-timed coquetry.

“Joan!” cried he, “thou foolish nyesse, thou moon-brained, sop-liver’d baggage! hast thou a mind to make me throw thee over this parapet into the castle moat? What is the knight to thee or thou to him, that thou must needs betray thyself into folly at the bare sight of him?”

“A-well-a-day!” replied Joan, “is it a crime so great to say what one thinks of a stranger? Indeed, sirs, I meant no harm.”

“That excuse shall not serve,” returned her father; “thou shalt now go home with me as a penance for thy folly; and, for the time coming, I shall know how to trust thee at a sight like this.”

The damsel made a very sorrowful face at this injunction, and began to expostulate with the hosteller on the barbarity of his resolution; but he was deaf to her intreaties.

“No, no,” cried he, “thou hast suffered enough by attending the shews and tilts; I will trust thee no longer. Well, now, do I remind me of thy dying mother’s request, that I would tie thee up from gadding to fairs and dedications, shews,

and gambollings. I would to St. Edward, I had counted more on her advice, and kept thee under a tighter rein. Come along with thee, thou nimble-tongued jade, come along; I will make thee wish to change places with a cloistered nun, I will. Come along."

"What would'st be at?" cried the granger; "let the wench stay. Marry, it's no such great sin, I trow, after all's said and done, to tell truth. Cheer thee, Joan, for thou shalt stay, wench, and enjoy thyself. Hollo, friar! wilt thou not give her pardon for her sin?"

"Ay, that I will," answered the mendicant, "if it were a thousand times as great; but I see no sin she hath wrought; a little womanish folly or so may well pass without correction; and so, good hosteller, let her rest. Hark! the trumpet sounds; the knights are entering the castle. Let her see the pageant ended, it is now nigh past."

"I tell ye," cried her father, obstinately, "if her staying here might purchase all the pardons in the pope's almary, I would not let her bide."

“Holy St. Peter!” exclaimed the friar, raising his hands and eyes, “all the pardons in the pope’s almary! Why, thou unthankful heretic, they would value at this present fifty thousand gold franks, setting aside the inexhaustible fund possessed by the apostle’s successor.”

“I will give thee, Miles,” said Alan Waldeyff, “what thou likest better than pardons or pardoners—a flaggon of thine own Gascony wine. Thou shalt drink reformation to thy daughter in it, man.”

“Ye tempt me in vain,” replied Aprisidly; “I have said it, and go she must.”

“And I have said she shall stay,” returned the granger; “and thou knowest that a yeoman never breaks his word till he has broken his neck; and so, by way of keeping mine, I shall even hold thee fast till the knights are in the castle.”

Waldeyff then wrapped his arms around Aprisidly, and pinioned him to his sides. The hosteller struggled to free himself, but unsuccessfully, being overmatched by the great strength of the Herculean granger.

“ Hold off, Alan !” cried he, “ Alan Waldeyff ! if thou regardest thy shins, which are of flesh and bone, and not of brass or iron, thou hadst better quit thy grasp. By our Lady, I will maul thee, arch-devil.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha !” ejaculated the sturdy granger, “ I have thee as fast as an ass in a pound. Kick away, master ass, and see if it will get thee loose.”

“ I will bruise thy flesh into batter,” continued the hosteller, “ and make it of as many colours as marbred worsted.”

“ I will tent thee, my old gill-hooter,” replied Waldeyff ; “ there are two words to that bargain. I would I had thee in the tumbrel Father Magpie was whilom talking of ; I would give thee a ducking to cool thine anger.”

“ Father Magpie ! thou irreverent coterel !” cried the friar, “ thou hast no more breeding than a wild boar.”

“ By my faith,” returned Alan, “ there is as much breeding under my russet jerkin as there is holiness beneath thy frock and cowl.”

“Thou art a malapert jack,” cried the mendicant, “and do’st deserve to die without having a holy hand to give thee the rood to kiss.”

“If the hand be no holier than thine, Friar Piebald,” returned the yeoman, “I shall never mourn the want of it.”

“Thou art a pretty varlet,” said the mendicant, “to be granger of an abbey; but there is the old rhythm for thine apology : —

“Saith Friar Tuck, ‘Our holy kirk,
To Heaven’s the nighest road :’
Bold Robin Hood replied, ‘I wis,
’Tis far away from God.’”

“Ha! ha! ha! Right, friar! Robin was right,” cried Waldeyff, “and thou art a devilish good sample of that saying.”

“Me, thou churl!” exclaimed the mendicant, “who can say that I am irregular in aught?”

“No one, my old spar-hawk,” replied the granger. “St. Francis himself liked a pretty girl, could toss off half a flaggon of wine, and play at single-sword with the best friar that ever wore hair-cloth shirt, and round-toed boots. Bravo, my king of cups, ha! ha! ha!”

This sally put an end to the friar's argument, who hung his head, and seemed quite discomfited. The Earl of Lancaster, attended by the French knight, Sir Aubrey Marcel, and the knights of his household, had by this time quitted the tilt-yard, and, passing the draw-bridge of the castle, entered the hall, whither we shall now follow them, leaving those who prefer it to remain with Aprisidly and his friends in the court.

CHAP. X.

Oh! 'tis an awful and heart sinking scene,
To see fall'n majesty in its affliction.
Earthquakes may rend the world, and storms the air;
Tempests may heave the ocean to the skies;
But the great soul of him, who, born for empire,
Hath by unlucky fortune been cast down,
Swells into chaos, and wild desolation.

Joan of Arc.

WE must take the liberty of preceding, for a few moments, the entrance of the guests into the hall of the castle, which was furnished with a chair of state fixed upon the dais, and surmounted by a canopy for the use of the king; and with benches covered with tapestry, placed in a semicircle, extending on each side of the temporary throne, for the occupation of the attendant nobles. The walls were hung with tapestry also; and the whole hall had a similitude as nigh to

that of the Tinel le roy* as its contracted limits, and the short time allowed for preparation would admit. A guard of men at arms, in complete mail, each bearing a tabard of the baron's arms, was placed at the outer door, who lined the ascent from the court yard to the folding doors of the hall. As our readers have before seen, the Lord Abbot Ingulphus, and his brother Sir Paschal Marcel, with their several followers, were already in attendance ; and, before the arrival of the Earl of Lancaster, had been joined by the Welsh knight, Sir Price Ap Gwyneth, who, upon his parol, was free to go whithersoever he would.

The earl now entered the hall, conducted by Sir Bertrand du Chatelet himself, and attended by Sir Aubrey Marcel, the French knight, and the retainers of his household. With the abbot and his brother, Lancaster was well acquainted, and met them with the familiarity of old friendship, at the same time introducing his foreign companion under the name of

* Tinel le roy was the king's dining hall ; but it frequently was used for his hall of audience.

Sir Raimonnet de la Folie. The knight did his devoirs with great etiquette and decorum, and then entered into a conversation with the poursuivant, with whom he appeared to have an intimate acquaintance. An animated conference was, at the same time, held between the Earl of Lancaster, the abbot, Sir Bertrand, and the civilian; which became general by the baron requesting to know from Sir Aubrey Marcel, what intentions he had with regard to his prisoner the Earl of Gloucester?

“My Lords,” said the civilian; “I am commissioned by my nephew to inform you, that he doth quit his title in the prisoner to the Earl of Lancaster. He, as the near kinsman of our young prince Edward, and one who has a stake in the kingdom’s weal, will see justice done to the favourite, and to the country. He asks no ransom for Despensers.”

“I seek none,” cried Aubrey. “He is the deadly foe of my young patron; and I would not shew him courtesy for a kingdom’s worth.”

“ He will have a fair trial according to the law ?” said the Welsh knight.

“ Doubt it not, Sir Knight,” replied the earl ; “ whilst my power and my counsel hold good for aught in England, he shall encounter no trial but that I would accord my dearest kinsman. By mine honour, I believe, he has deserved death ; for to the score of his ambition and intemperate folly, we may place all the evil which hath of late years befallen this divided country.”

“ Was he not,” cried the civilian, “ the accursed cause of the death of the Earl of Hereford, and of the foul murder of Thomas Earl of Lancaster, my good lord’s father ? God assoile their souls.”

“ And hath he not,” said the abbot, taking up the accusation, “ possessed himself, like a vile usurper, of the goods and moveables of the Templars, of their metropolitan house, with the lands appurtenant, to the great damage of all Christian hospitality ?”

“ Ay, and more,” cried Sir Paschal in continuation ; “ for there has been no

forfeiture or attainder of late days, by which this false favourite and his faction have not been gratified and enriched: wherefore they have sought occasion to drive men into treason, so that they might share among them the spoils of his inheritance. His father is richer than the palatine of Chester; hath more lands, fairer castles, a greater retinue, better moveables, and as much money in hard cash as all the nobles of England together."

"He had — he had," cried the earl; "but he has now nothing — no; not so much as a grave to cover his festering corse."

"Is Winchester then dead?" cried all at once.

"He met his fate at Bristol," replied the earl, "and died, as I am told, with a fortitude and gallantry becoming a better cause, and a nobler man."

"God rest his spirit," ejaculated the Welsh knight: "these will be heavy tidings to his son and master. Died he in battle, my lord, for he had sworn to defend Bristol with his life?"

“ He died on the gibbet,” replied Lancaster, with a sigh, as if he deprecated the fate of the old earl.

“ On a gibbet !” cried Ap Gwyneth in amazement. “ Then the city was taken by the queen.”

“ It was delivered to her with Winchester, by the townsmen.” returned the earl.

“ Traitorous villains !” cried Sir Price. “ But of what crime was the venerable peer accused ? Is it treason, my lords, to support the king whilst he yet sways the sceptre ? if so, my own life, I fear, is in jeopardy.

“ Fear not,” answered the earl. “ The accusation of the barons against Winchester was any thing but his fidelity to the king. It is bootless to run over the many high charges, which, proven, reached his life. The manner of his execution, though perhaps excusable in these times of commotion, I should, had I been present, have steadily opposed ; but the thing is done—he sleeps with his fathers—and I say with you, Sir Knight, God pardon him his sins, and give rest to his spirit.”

“The next object for our counsel and consideration,” said the abbot, “is the disposal of the king; for I trust it will not be thought prudent to allow his unrestrained departure.”

“By our Lady, no,” cried the civilian: “I hold it best that he be placed in some sure hand, until the kingdom be quieted and reformation made.”

“He cannot be in hands more sure and honourable,” said the earl, “than with his captor, the noble Baron du Chatelet. I am advised that the queen will speedily hold a parliament, wherein the settlement of the government will be equitably determined: until such settlement be made, no place can be fitter for the king’s residence than Malpas, aloof as it is from the agitations and the designs of all parties in the state.”

“I will hold him fast, my lords,” cried Du Chatelet, “or lose my head. I have force sufficient to defy all his friends, English and Welsh.”

He threw a significant sneer upon Sir Price Ap Gwyneth, who reddened at his irony, and replied, “Hark ye, Sir Baron!

you have once been successful, thanks to this young knight who made me his prisoner, and won the rampart of my fortress, when the only part you played was that of an idle spectator; but the fortune of war may next bring victory to my banner, and clip the wings of your exultation."

"We are not met here," said Lancaster gravely, "to dispute the superiority of arms between our host and this knight. Had we not best send a message to the king, requesting his appearance in this circle?"

"I will myself summon him," said Du Chatelet: "he has long risen, but preferred the privacy of his own chamber."

The baron withdrew, and proceeded without ceremony to the king's apartment, where he found Edward seated in a melancholy mood upon his bed-foot, attended by Gloucester, Baldock, and his other servants, who stood around him in mournful silence. When he saw Du Chatelet he raised his head, which before hung drooping on his breast, and with a passionate air enquired of him wherefore he appeared in his presence uncalled for?

“Have we no place on earth that we may call our own?” He continued, “Have ye driven us from our throne into this narrow chamber, and yet ye are not content, but would deprive us of it also? Where would ye hound us? Is it to the grave?”

The marcher made no reply to this speech, (which was evidently the effect of mental irritation, and not caused by any personal dislike which Edward had conceived against his host,) but made haste to inform the king of the arrival of the Earl of Lancaster, and of his desire to see him.

“Thomas of Lancaster!” cried the king, thunderstruck.

“Lancaster!”—echoed Gloucester,—
“then my time is come.”

“What does the rebel here?” cried the king, with that forgetfulness which, in his moments of passion, seemed to envelope his whole faculties. “Despenser! was he not banished on the treason of his father? How durst he set foot on English ground till we had released him from his exile?”

“ Will it please ye descend to the hall, my lord ?” cried Du Chatelet.

“ No, it will not please us, thou irreverent caitiff,” exclaimed the monarch.—
“ Back with ye to your knot of traitors, and say Edward Plantagenet, though reft of his throne, will still maintain his kingly dignity.”

The marcher looked upon the agitated form of the fallen sovereign with mingled scorn and pity ; the latter was a feeling he had seldom exercised ; but the sight of him who had once been a powerful monarch, at the head of a gallant kingdom, and enjoying all earthly content, now reduced to the weak, helpless, and wretched being before him, produced in the breast of the baron, if not actual commiseration, at least a melancholy feeling ; which was perhaps the deeper felt, as it reminded him of the instability and transitoriness of fortune. It operated so powerfully upon Du Chatelet, that he ceased to insult his royal captive ; and even offered to conduct his friends to the king’s chamber, if he preferred such an arrangement to that of descending to the

hall. The chancellor Baldock, however, assisted by Dispenser, persuaded the king to submit to the earl's request; and he at length rose from his seat, and being assisted with his hood and mantle by his attendants, followed the marcher.

He was supported on his entrance by Gloucester on one side, and the chancellor on the other; and thus ascended the canopied seat or throne, without noticing the lords around, who instantly uncovered.

There were still in the countenance of Edward the remains of that beauty and dignity, for which, in his earlier and more happy years, he had been highly celebrated. Our readers are well aware that the greatest majesty of feature, and the most penetrating expression of countenance, are compatible with the most perfect vacuity of intellect, and the most unaccountable want of the corresponding endowments of natural understanding. If Lavater had been living at this period, and had judged Edward by his system of physiognomy, he would have thought him wise to a degree of perfection, brave

unto rashness, dignified unto majesty, courteous unto ceremony, and generous to a fault; whereas, of all these virtues, he possessed only the last, and perhaps the worst, when not guided by the reins of prudence and discretion. His liberality, or rather his love of squandering, as it could only be confined to a few, begat disgust among the many, and ranged all those who were without the orbit of his extravagance on the side of his enemies. The earl was touched with the misery and despair which the king's countenance exhibited, and at once turned the edge of his revenge from the unfortunate Edward upon his unprincipled favourite, the Earl of Gloucester.

After sitting some moments silent, as if to gather courage for opening the interview, Edward raised his head, and said in an ironical tone, "So, cousin Lancaster, we are honoured beyond our expectation with thy presence at our court."

"No doubt, my lord," replied the earl, it is also beyond your desire; but I will yet take upon myself to say, I am the best friend you have in your presence."

“Is that other friend of ours,” cried the king, “our wife, and her friend Roger Mortimer,—are they in presence too? or are they fearful of meeting the looks of a wronged husband and injured sovereign?”

“I have not seen Queen Isabel, my lord,” answered Lancaster, “since my return from France; but I hear she is at Bristol.”

“At Bristol!” cried the king; “where is thy father, Despenser? Did he not swear to keep that city with his life?”

“Heaven guard both, my liege!” replied the favourite: “doubt not but he is faithful to his duty.”

“Despenser!” said the earl solemnly; “thou didst rejoice when the head of my father was stricken off at Pomfret; nay, thou wert thyself the arch-juggler who did betray him to his death. Guess what I then felt, and the desire of revenge with which I was consumed. Despenser! I now forgive thee; for the chance is thine own, bide it as thou mayest.”

“Ha! Lancaster,” cried the favourite, with breathless emotion, “say not, I be-

seech thee, by the love of thy chaste mother, by the bones of thy father, and thy soul's expectation of eternal life, that Winchester is dead. Tell me not of that horrible consummation, though it be true. True!—impossible—his age—his grey hairs—”

The earl shook his head, and Gloucester roared aloud, “What! dead! oh! no; he is perhaps your prisoner—ye have doomed his aged head to the block; but spare him as ye are men who either have or have had fathers.”

“Thou didst not think of mine, Despensers,” answered the earl.

“Thine! what was thy father to me?” cried the favourite, forgetting in the agony of his passion, the similitude of their cases. “If ye will spare him, I will give up all—reduce both him and myself to beggary—fly the kingdom—sacrifice my own life—ought that ye can name, invent, or devise, shall be done for his rescue.”

“It is too late!” cried Du Chatelet. “Thy father was hanged at Bristol but three days back.”

“ Hang’d ! ” shrieked out the favourite, and in hysterical convulsions fell forward on his face.

The whole circle was agitated at this scene. The king descended from the throne, and raising Gloucester in his arms, bedewed him with his tears. The Earl of Lancaster, to whom the favourite’s despair did perhaps recall the image of his own grief, wept also ; and the detestation in which he had been held before this violent expression of his filial devotion, was by it much softened and diminished. At length he came to himself, and the first use he made of the re-enjoyment of his faculties, was to curse the authors of his misfortune, and the bearers of the sad intelligence.

“ Oh ! cursed of all men,” cried he in frantic rage, “ be those who could do their despite on that hoary head ; and cursed be the croaking raven who hath rung this death-knell in mine ear ; cursed be the very sun and the day which did witness this foul and most horrible tragedy ; and cursed be my own coward heart and craftless head that could leave

him to the treachery of his remorseless foes."

"Hugh, Hugh," said the king, "dost thou regret having followed thy prince?"

"My prince!" answered the favourite abruptly; "and is my prince as near to me, and as dear to me, as the father who begat me? Away, away—By heaven I regret all things for my parent's sake."

He threw himself upon one of the benches, and supporting his head with his hands, gave free vent to his agonizing grief. The king, and Baldock the chancellor, endeavoured to console and encourage him, but to no purpose: he started up from his seat, and advancing to the middle of the knights, cried, "Lords! behold me ready for death; ye have vilely and murderously slain an innocent old man; ye need have no scruples to put a finish to your bloody work. My father did nought but what was arranged by myself, and commanded by the king. I alone am guilty, if guilt there be, and should singly have borne the punishment; but since ye have conferred martyrdom on an innocent, in

God's name do not spare him who ought to have been your victim."

"If thou diest, Hugh Despenser," said Sir Paschal, "it must be by the law; we are not, as thou sayest, murderers."

"Ha! by Saint Paul, ye are worse!" cried the favourite; "for ye but prolong my torments whilst ye meditate my death; and after lingering hours, days, weeks, perhaps months of anguish, I shall finish with my arms reversed upon the gallows-tree."

"Thou didst but wish for fair play," said Aubrey Marcel, "and thou wilt have it."

"Fair play doth mean a fair trial, Sir Knight," said the chancellor De Baldock, "at least in an honourable vocabulary. Sir Hugh must be tried by his peers, and who shall summon and hold the court as the king's high marshal?"

"Thou dost remind us, De Baldock," cried the marcher with an ironical scowl, "of the summary method by which the noble Earl of Lancaster met his doom. It befits ye to talk of fair play."

"God wot I had no hand in the earl's

death," answered the chancellor: "I would take the corsned * on my innocence."

"God wot thou liest, meddling priest," cried Lancaster. "If thou hadst no part in his execution, it was thy reaching hand, with those of thy compeers, that did stab him home."

"He was a rebel to his liege sovereign," exclaimed Gloucester, as if regardless of his life, or rather with the intention of provoking his enemies to shorten his sufferings, by putting a present end to his existence; "a rebel and a traitor, and deserved the fate he met with."

"Ha! Hugh Despenser," cried the earl, "thou art a false villain; and but I should defraud the headsman of his fee, thy life should instant answer for thy lie."

"I do defy ye all to the death," answered the favourite. "Thee, Lancaster,

* Corsned (Sax. *copp*, curse, *nebbe*, forced,) was a superstitious trial used by our ancestors, wherein a piece of bread, first execrated by the priest, was delivered to the suspected person, who swallowed it by way of purgation.

who dost wear a mask of honour to coat thy ill-disguised ambition ; thee Du Chalet, who carest no whit for thy country but what thou canst pluck out of her distempered bowels ; and ye factious priest and lawyer, who seek in my downfall and the dethronement of your king your own enriching and aggrandizement. I will say nought of thee, Aubrey Marcel, for thou hast shown thyself open to some touch of compunction : it is thy sword which has brought me to the block ; but I forgive thee my death for thy compassion to my sovereign.”

“ Hugh Despenser,” cried the king in a voice hardly audible, “who durst harm thee when we with our royal breast shall buckler thy person ?”

“ Ah ! my good Lord,” answered Gloucester, “ I pray God and the Holy Virgin thou mayest be able to travel safely through the evil day. My blood, that of my father, and those of all our kindred and alliance, will be well spilt if the sacrifice do preserve thy crown and life.”

“ If either be in danger, Despenser,”

said the abbot, “ the blame and the shame be on thy head : thy robbery, extortion, usurpation, and arrogance, have pulled ruin upon thy sovereign : the measure of thy crimes is complete, and justice is about to overtake thee. Well mayest thou cry out with the Psalmist, Domine ! Domine ! inclina aurem tuam ad preces nostras. Deus ! in adjutorium meum intende. Thy cry is not heard ; thou hast outraged thy Saviour as well as thy sovereign ; thou hast no hope, for I tell thee, thou sacrilegious miscreant, that purgatory itself hath no room for thee ; the door, which to most sinners is open after an expiatory punishment, upon thee is closed for ever ; thy sins are too great, too monstrous, too deadly to allow a hope that thou wilt ever be cleansed in the blood of the Redeemer. Tremble then, thou lost one ; for Christ, who suffered the pains of death and hell for the benefit of mankind, was never born, did never suffer, has never risen for thy salvation.”

The anathema of the abbot, delivered in a warm and energetic manner, produced a sensation of awe and dread upon

all present, except upon him against whom it was levelled. The king especially, who, being of a feeble intellect, was the more liable to superstitious impressions, shrunk with terror as Ingulphus, at the conclusion of his speech, snatched from the cross-bearer his holy rood, and held it aloft as a spectacle to his auditors, and a corporal testimony of his doctrine. No one, in those days of error, durst question the truth of those denunciations, issued forth with such circumstances of imposing sanctity by the clergy. To doubt was to incur the odium of infidelity, and perhaps its penalties; whilst those who were hardy enough to dispute the anathematizing and pardoning power of the priesthood were held connected with the powers of darkness, and delivered over to eternal perdition. To maintain the sanctity of the clerical character was indeed a matter of more importance with the church of Rome than to preserve the principles of morality, or the Christian doctrine; and the several disputes in which the kings of England and the Popes were engaged, from the Nor-

man conquest to the Reformation, were always occasioned by the ambition and vanity, or by the avarice of the clergy, and never by their solicitude for the advancement or honour of Christianity. The abbot Ingulphus, a man of a noble and commanding presence, and who enforced his oratory by an action at once graceful and dignified, did well support the dignity of his high station, and seemed entitled, both by his office and ability, to the attention and respect of the assembled knights. Gloucester alone, who appeared reckless of his temporal or eternal fate, showed no sign or fear, or even despondence, at his prophetic denunciation; but replied to him with a staid and firm countenance. “Thou sayest, Lord Abbot, I am a robber, usurper, and extortioner. What man have I robbed? Whose lands have I usurped? In what dealing have I committed extortion? Unless thou canst prove thine accusation, I fear me, thou art but the wind which fans the flame of uncharitableness, and not the holy water which should extinguish strife and discord.”

“Need I, my lords,” cried the abbot, turning to his friends, “trouble ye with a formal and particular charge, when these crimes and more are as notorious in thee, Dispenser, as the golden sun in his mid-day course? If thou be’st not an usurper, where be thy title and thy muniments to the temple?”

“We did present him with that gift,” cried the king.

“My lord, my lord,” returned Ingulphus, “you could not present him with that which was not yours to give. — If, upon the dissolution of the most noble and injured order of the Templars, their spoils did escheat to any, surely it was to his Holiness, our spiritual father, and he, the world knows, hath granted their temporalities to the knights of St. John.”

“The king doth disclaim the Pope’s power in this award,” cried De Baldock. “*Rex habet potestatem et jurisdictionem super omnes qui sunt in regno suo; et ea quæ sunt jurisdictionis ejus ad nullum pertinent nisi ad regiam dignitatem.*”

“Jurisdictio, doth here mean gubernatio,” interrupted Sir Paschal; “and

we do readily grant that ea quæ ad suum gubernationem pertinent, he hath the administration of without a rival ; but as the temporalities attached to spiritual offices are foreign to his government—”

“ How foreign ? ” interrupted the chancellor. “ Is it not a common practice for the temporalities of each bishopric to be seized into the king’s hands during the abeyance ? ”

“ Seized ! De Baldock,” cried the civilian, smiling at the word ; “ thou sayest true. Such hath been the most injurious and illegal practice. But I will ask thee, in my turn, if, in the different charters of right which our kings have granted to us, this seizure, as thou dost term it, hath not been acknowledged untenable and improper ? Robert, thou art a good lawyer, though a bad man. Thou knowest that Despenser’s title, if he have any, to the temple, is as fragile as that thin smoke in the chimney. But our argument, though conclusive, is idle and unprofitable. Thy client, Baldock, and thyself also, must answer for your crimes before a proper tribunal. If there thy sophistry and elo-

quence may help thee aught, so be it; and God send thee a good deliverance!"

"I am ready to answer now," said Despenser, "here, or wheresoever else it shall please ye to order my trial. I am ready to die without trial, if ye will have it so."

"Thou shalt be fairly dealt withal," said the Earl of Lancaster: "though thou art my house's foe, I would not do thee wrong."

"My lord," cried the favourite, with a scornful gaiety, "take my counsel for once. Have out a block in the court, and bring thither your headsman. I am prepared for death, and 'tis like I may never be in such humour with him again. Ye will, besides, do me a courtesy, for I shall here suffer as becomes a nobleman; by a public condemnation, perhaps, as a felon."

His brow knit, and his countenance fell as he concluded his speech, whilst the king said, impatiently, "Hugh Despenser, why dost thou anticipate thy death? We have yet friends in England, and they shall be tried to the uttermost.

What can we do for thee, Lancaster? Speak, man; name thy reward, and become our liege man. And thou, Du Chatelet, will not the earldom of March tempt thee? And, if thou likest not the border land, we will give thee King's Vale Royal, our barony in this county. Thou, Lord Abbot, shalt have a bishoprick; and our old friend, Sir Paschal, a justiceship in eyre. What say ye, gentlemen, may we count upon your assistance?"

His auditors only smiled scornfully at this barefaced and impolitic address.—Had Du Chatelet, Ingulphus, or the civilian, been disposed to accept his terms, they would have been deterred by the presence of the earl, whose inflexible virtue was notorious; but each of them had his own private and particular reasons for rejecting all compromise. The abbot and his brother too well knew the power of the queen and prince, to think it might be opposed with any chance of success; and as Aubrey, the son of one and the nephew of the other, was at this time a favourite with the young Edward, they would

not have hazarded his fortune, even had the chances been doubtful. We shall defer the reasons of the marcher for his neglect of the king's proffered bounty, until a future opportunity.

The earl looked round upon his friends for a moment, and replied to the king, in a tone at once mild and resolute, "My lord, you forget that, instead of having earldoms, and baronies, and bishoprics, and justiceships, to give away, you have not a shelter wherein to hide yourself from the storm which these men's folly hath awakened; nor can I believe, were you in the height of power, and the possession of uncountable riches, that there is one man here who, for gain's sake, would desert the cause of his suffering country. This young knight hath placed Despensers in my hands, and the use I make of this charge is, to set him at the bar of his country; if he doth deserve death, he must perish."

The king's face grew red with indignation, and he frowned that steady and relentless frown which was peculiar to his race, and which made him appear the

image of stern and fiery resolution. He rose from his seat, and dragging his hood over his face, enveloped his figure in his mantle. He then descended slowly from the throne, and stood a moment in the midst of the knights, saying, "Fare ye well, sirs; we will not, then, be beholden to your loyalty or your valour for assistance; but we tell ye, proud men, despite your treason, and that of our adulterous queen, we will yet hold our kingdom and secure our friends. God is for us, if the the whole world shall abandon us; and fortune, which, like a rebel, hath left our standard, will soon, with her natural fickleness, desert our enemies. Farewell."

"My Lords," cried Gloucester, as he withdrew, "I know my fate must be better or worse; but I entreat ye, as ye are true knights, let the decision be speedy. To me doubt is worse than death."

The king and his attendants then returned to his chamber, leaving those behind to consult on the adoption of a plan for conveying Despenser, Baldock,

and the other attendants, to Queen Isabel. Their resolutions were soon formed; and the earl, attended by the abbot, the civilian, Sir Aubrey Marcel, and Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, withdrew to the abbey. The men at arms and soldiers of the garrison were then dismounted and disarmed, and the spectators retired to their hodiernal occupations.

CHAP. XI.

And you that love the commons, follow me.—
Now show yourselves men—'tis for liberty!
We will not leave one lord, one gentleman :
Spare none but such as go in clouted shoon,
For they are thrifty honest men, and such
As would (but that they dare not) take our parts.
Second Part Henry VI.

THE departure of Gloucester, Baldock, and the other attendants upon King Edward, had been determined before the separation of Lancaster and his friends ; and Sir Aubrey Marcel, at the earl's earnest intreaty, had undertaken the charge of escorting them to the queen whithersoever she might have gone from Bristol, should she have quitted that city before his arrival. He could the more readily undertake this business, as the purpose for which he had come so far north, that of aiding the partisans of the queen to preserve public tranquillity, seemed now perfectly answered by the captivation of

those who could alone beget public disturbance. The cause of the king, moreover, was at this time so unpopular, that there were few who would even speak in his favour, and none who would hazard life or limb in upholding his quarrel.—The very officers of his army and of his household, as if bit by the mania of desertion, absconded from their duties, and joined the queen's army. Gentle and simple, earl, baron, knight, squire, fri-lazin, and villain, alike condemned their unfortunate sovereign; whilst his spouse was as much the object of their regard and admiration. There is, and ever has been, in the English character, a spirit of tenderness and charity towards the female sex, as honourable to its humanity as it is to its justice and to its courtesy. Until the ages of chivalry, women (we have it upon record) were without dignity or consideration. It was not until the wild hordes of Scandinavian warriors had conquered southern Europe, and had polished away some portion of their original barbarity in the more polite intercourse of its luxurious inhabitants, that

the ladies were held up as “the grace, life, and ornament of society”—as the dispensers of reward to the valiant champion, whose greatest guerdon was the beauty of his adoration. This chivalrous enthusiasm was never carried to an extravagant height in this country, where the people have more real respect for female character than any other nation. The French have always arrogated to themselves the palm of precedence in courtesy, in a superior knowledge of etiquette, and especially in that estimation of the female sex, which is, perhaps, the highest mark of a country’s civilization. But if we allow them the merit consequent on their knowledge and appreciation of female character, we can by no means admit that they have exhibited proofs of real regard for it in any way competing with the examples of our own countrymen. The ladies in France may have made a more brilliant figure at the tournament, in the revel, perhaps, in all public observances, where the devotion and respect of the male sex could be shown off with the greatest splendour and eclat;

but it is in the domestic circle, under privation, or in misfortune, that the women of England have been cherished, honoured, and defended. And, if we be reproached with our modern practice of discarding the ladies from our convivial entertainments, whence our rivals have argued a remaining tincture of barbarity, we may reply, that such a practice is better, and more consonant to the duties of moral civilization, than their custom of discussing all subjects, however outré and indelicate, in the presence of their women. In short, it is our maxim rather to be guilty of ill manners, than bring a blush upon the cheek of modesty; whilst it is that of our neighbours to discard all modesty for the sake of the *savoir vivre*. If proofs were needed, that the gallantry of the French displays itself rather in an ostentatious parade, than in real respect and devotion, we might adduce many from their own writers; but we shall only remind our readers of one, which, however, is sufficient for our purpose; we mean the exclusion of females from the royal succession by the *salique law*. This

arbitrary and impolitic custom, as it is founded on the resolution that no woman is worthy to wield the sceptre of France, does at once destroy the fabric of their courtesy, and reduce to thin air their empty and unsubstantial boasting. On the other hand, we request our readers to note the conduct of our English ancestors to Maud, the daughter of Henry the First, when the throne, which belonged of right to her son, was usurped by the warlike and powerful Stephen. She came here helpless, friendless, without troops, arms, or money; and yet, so great was the detestation of the English against him who oppressed a female, that they instantly deserted the usurper, and eventually restored to her son the enjoyment of his birthright, and the crown of his ancestors. This is not a solitary instance of public virtue. There are many such in our history; but we think we have said enough to prove our proposition, and we shall now return to the subject we were treating of before this digression.

The morning succeeding the interview between the king and the lords was fixed for the march of Sir Aubrey and his prisoners; and the latter were apprized of this arrangement, on the evening previous, in order that they might make the preparations necessary for their journey. We shall but briefly attempt to pourtray the rage and grief of the king at this separation, which overwhelmed him with a despair and despondency from which he never recovered. He demanded to see the rebels, as he called them, who thus tore from him his household; but they were too resolved in their purpose, and too well aware of the inutility of such a meeting, to comply with his request. Gloucester and De Baldock did, indeed, use all their influence over the unhappy monarch to sooth his grief, and allay the fire of his resentment: they flattered him with hopes of their acquittal, and of better days being in store for all; they taught him the absurdity and impolicy of questioning the authority of their powerful enemies, who, having the

law in their own hands, could turn its fiery edge upon whomsoever they thought fit; they conjured him to bend for a little while to the blast, like the osier sapling, which, when the storm is gone by, doth recover its former erect position, and not resist, like the sturdy oak, which, rather than bow its mighty head, will be blown headlong from its foundation. They assured him that their safety, perhaps his own, depended upon a quiet and unresisting acquiescence in the will of their captors, whose opposition might be softened, if their favour might not be acquired, by a sensible and judicious obedience. All these arguments and many more, urged by his attendants, produced no effect on the frantic monarch, who fancied he foresaw in the removal of his friends a prelude to his own fate. He paced his chamber the livelong night with hasty steps, sometimes remaining silent and thoughtful for an hour together, and then bursting out into expressions of rage, and execrations as fearful as they were impotent, upon the authors of his ruin. He now threatened revenge, then begged for

mercy ; at one time called upon Heaven for its lightning to blast his fierce enemies, and at another prayed God to forgive them their disloyalty. In short, he acted fifty parts during the night, and day-break found him in the same state of rage, sorrow, and trepidation. His attendants were, at last, obliged to make use of stratagem to avoid the misery of a parting scene. By an arrangement with the Baron Du Chatelet, which Gloucester had negotiated on leaving the room for some private purpose, they were publicly informed by the constable, that their march was for that day postponed. Upon this information, which in some measure quieted the king, he was persuaded to retire to rest ; and his faculties were so overcome by the violence of his grief and his loss of repose, that he speedily fell into a sound and unbroken sleep. Despensers then knelt by his bedside, and, with tears of burning regret, kissed the hand of his master : he rose hastily, nigh stifled with grief, and, casting a last look upon his sovereign, quitted the chamber. The other attendants severally kissed the

king's hand, and followed the favourite. Some few, of little consequence either by birth or station, were remanded by the lords, and allowed to remain with Edward, to whose chamber they gladly and instantly returned. Gloucester, Baldock, and the others, who were to set forward, were escorted by Du Chatelet himself and a guard of his retainers, to the abbey, where all the servants of the monastery were in a general bustle, preparing for the departure of Sir Aubrey, and attending the abbot and his guests, who were at breakfast in the refectory. Thither Sir Bertrand repaired, and found the poursuivant armed and ready for mounting. He was in earnest conference with the Earl of Lancaster, from whom he was the bearer of letters to the queen and prince. These epistles contained information of the king's capture, and requested, above all things, that the favourite might have a fair and impartial trial, according to the law of the land, for which his (the earl's) word was pledged. To these missives Lancaster added several verbal charges, which he desired the poursuivant to com-

municate personally to his royal friends. Their conversation was interrupted by Du Chatelet, who, advancing, said, "Sir Aubrey, for the greater security of your charge, I have augmented your force with fifty of mine own spears. Fierabras, who leads them, will obey your orders."

"There is no need, my Lord Baron," replied Aubrey, "that you should put yourself to trouble and expense. My Hainaulters are strong enough to defeat any attempt at a rescue."

"By St. Edward, I doubt it," cried Du Chatelet, "and so will you when you learn that Ap Gwyneth rode hence at day-break. That Welshman is a stirring borderer, and might mar our plans."

"Sir Bertrand is right," said the earl; "and I thank him for his courtesy. My retainers have already set onward for London, or they might have spared his men at arms."

"Mind it not, Sir Earl," returned the baron; "should any broil arise, we have force enough without their help, and at need we have Taillebois to our succour."

“It is time, then,” cried Aubrey, “we should be upon our march. Fare ye well, sirs; the times will be better or worse when we meet again: but ye shall soon hear from me.”

The abbot, Sir Paschal, and Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, who had, during the conversation we have recited, been engaged in discussing their matin meal, to wit, venison pasty and Gascony wine, now arose from table and joined their friends. The Frenchman shook the hand of Aubrey, and said, “On my faith, Sir Poursuivant, were not my Lord of Lancaster detained in this barbarous spot by his patriotic self-devotion, I should hold it high honour to have thy company to London. Commend me to thy mistress, and assure her I wore her colours in the last tilt at Paris. But hast thou yet learnt her name?”

“No,” answered Aubrey; “I but know her yet under the feigned one of Morgana.”

“Morgan la faye! ha! ha! ha!” ejaculated the Frenchman, “thou art a romantic knight that hast been errant a

whole year, encountering those uncivil chevaliers who denied to thy mistress the palm of beauty, and yet art thyself a stranger to her name and family."

"Is this so, indeed?" said the Earl of Lancaster; "and, prithee, Aubrey, who is this blazing star that has fired thy young imagination?"

"Faith, my lord," replied the poursuivant, "all I know of her is, that she is some relation to one of the queen's ladies; but they kept her name and rank so close between them, that I could never gain clue to the mystery."

"By St. Agnes, the most beautiful of saints," cried Sir Raimonnet; "she is a paragon of charms, a heaven of delight, a mere minion of all that is exquisite to the eye and fancy of an adept. Well might she captivate thee, Aubrey, young as thou art, and raw to the charms of fine women. I would she were in her proper sphere, the Parisian court; by the light of my life, she would prove a loadstone to all the gallantry and chivalry of my country."

“What, Sir Knight!” exclaimed Du Chatelet, “do you then confess there is no lady in France that may equal this English beauty?”

“To answer you on mine honour, as a knight,” replied the Frenchman, “I must avow I never saw one. To say there is not her peer in France, is too much; for I have heard it said our beauties are to be found rather in the cottage than at court; from extreme youth, I have frequented the courts of princes, and, by St. Denis, in none of them have I met her equal.”

“She hath no peer on earth,” cried Aubrey.

“And yet,” said Du Chatelet, “I would stake my barony against a yard of land, that I show thee one fair maid, so far excelling her, that ye shall yourselves confess her charms are paramount.”

“Thou do’st presume, Du Chatelet,” cried Aubrey. “Thou knowest neither her figure, nor her features. A blind man might as well judge of colours as thou of my mistress’s beauty.”

“Thou wearest her portrait on thy quarterlois,” cried the baron, attempting to seize it.

“Hold off thy hand,” cried the poursuivant, starting back and grasping his dagger; “no one, save he that conquers me in battle, shall ever look upon that face and live. I have now business in hand, Du Chatelet; but when it is done, I will hold thee a course or two for our ladies honour.”

“Thou wilt find me ready,” replied the baron; “but to-morrow Sir Raimonnet shall see Blanche Taillebois; and if he does not confess she outshines thy mistress, I will give him leave to call me knave, and the idol of my soul a swart Ethiop.”

“My love,” cried Aubrey, “is as fair as light.”

“And mine,” said the baron, “has a skin whiter than ivory.”

“My mistress,” continued the poursuivant, “has eyes more dark and piercing than diamonds in their native cavern.”

“And the glances of my beauty,”

cried Sir Bertrand, "do resemble the short flashes of lightning in the mirkiness of a thunderstorm."

"If my angel smiles," said the bachelor, "it is like those beams which escape from paradise when the porter of heaven does unclosethe gate."

"And the smile of my bride," continued the marcher, "is like the revival of nature in the spring time, bringing life and resurrection to that which was dead and withered."

"The shape of Morgana," ejaculated Aubrey, "is something more than mortal;—it combines the sylphid beauty with the activity of woman."

"That of Blanche," cried Sir Bertrand, "is more delicate than the figure of the young fawn, and more active than its mother."

"My queen," said the poursuivant, "has a ravishing wit, yet a gentle spirit. She is full of courage, purity, and love."

"And mine," said the baron, "is playful and yet virtuous, mild and yet spirited, warm and yet pure."

"You say nothing of her love!" in-

interrupted Sir Raimonnet. A black cloud came instantly over the marcher's brow, which was observed by the Earl of Lancaster, who cried, —

“ A truce, sirs, to your responses. If ye are to be believed, and I doubt ye not, your ladies do as nigh resemble each other as one star doth another ; but come, Aubrey, to horse, to horse. If the queen be in London, thou mayest the sooner see thy mistress.”

The whole company went forth to the abbey porch, where they found the Hainaulters drawn up and ready for march : the constable and his company were there also, fully armed ; and, in the midst, were the prisoners, Gloucester, De Baldock, and the others, mounted on the hacknies they had ridden from Caergwyneth. One of Aubrey's body squires led his barbed war horse, whilst he mounted a handsome palfry more lightly trapped. The poursuivant's pennon was then unfolded, and they proceeded slowly towards the great gate of the town, still attended by the earl and his friends, who held the bachelor in

conversation. The portal was thrown open, and the headmost horsemen advanced across the barriers under the command of the Red Squire. Aubrey lingered for a moment to receive his last charge from the earl ; but before he had put spur to his palfrey, Fierabras ordered a halt, and cried out that a great crowd of armed men were hastening to the barriers.

“ On horseback or a-foot,” cried Du Chatelet, pressing forward.

“ A-foot, a-foot ;” replied the constable, “ they are cocksetts and villains, the scum of the country, armed with scythes and hay-forks.”

Aubrey advanced to the gate of the barriers, and was followed by his father, the earl, his uncle, and the French knight.

The mob consisted of several hundred rustics, some armed with bills, bows, and rusty swords ; some with pikes ; but the generality with no other weapons than hay forks or scythes ; a few of them wore the wambais, or quilted doublet, directed by royal ordinance to be kept, among

other articles of defensive and offensive armour, by persons of a certain competency; but the greater number were entirely destitute of that defence. They marched without any sort of order, shouting, and hallowing to each other with great obstreperousness; flourishing their weapons, and dancing with fierce and antick gesticulation. In short, they resembled a band of madmen or savages, and seemed bent on some mischievous and desperate design. Undaunted at the appearance of the men at arms, they continued their march, and speedily arrived at the barriers which separated them from the poursuivant and his company. The baron Du Chatelet, who was near the gate, called to them, demanding the occasion of their assembling thus in arms, to which they replied, with loud shouts, “We will have Despenser — give us Despenser — he shall die the death — Queen Isabel for ever!” — And some few voices cried, “A Mortimer — a Mortimer — the Queen and Mortimer!”

Being thus assured they did not differ in party, the marcher waved his hand

for silence, at which signal the mob was in some measure hushed, he then continued, —

“ Men of Cheshire ! the favourite Despenser is in the hands of these our men at arms, who are conducting him to the queen. He will meet the reward of his misdeeds ; and so ye may depart to your homes with this assurance.”

The mob answered with cries of “ The marcher — the marcher ! ” But one of them, who appeared to have some authority over the rest, and whose consequence was denoted by his mantle of red birreau, and his hufken or iron scull cap, waved his brown bill for silence, and then said, —

“ Masters ! hear me ; for if ye will not hear me, who am your brother and a man of the same degree, who will ye listen to that will tell ye God’s truth ? These nobles, that dress so fine and scorn us who are their slaves, do hold one to another, and, for aught we know, the marcher may march off with Despenser and chouse us of our revenge.”

At this speech, the mob made the

welkin ring with cries of, ‘ Hal Furrier ! Hal Furrier ! ’ which appeared to be the denomination of the spokesman.

The baron was highly enraged at their presumption, and cried aloud, “ Base hinds ! do ye give more credit to that villain’s word than ye do to my honour ? ”

“ Ay, we do ; ” replied the rustics. “ Hal Furrier for ever ! ”

“ Retire good people, ” cried the abbot, advancing to the barrier ; “ ye ought to be content with my lord’s assurance. Despensers is now on his road to the queen. ”

“ Ay marry, ” replied the furrier, “ ye say so ; but I say he is not. He is on his way truly, but how on his way ? that’s the point, my masters. Ye say he is on his way to the queen ; but I say he should be on his way to the gallows ; and we will have it so, will we not brothers ? ”

“ Ay, ay ! ” shouted the mob ; “ we will have Despensers, dead or alive. ”

“ Ye know not what he utter, ” cried Ingulphus ; “ would ye interfere between justice and the prisoner ? ”

“ Yea ; we would have his head,” returned the spokesman, “ and his head we will have.”

“ Know ye not, vile grooms,” cried Bertrand, “ that I have force enough to destroy ye ? How then dare ye seek to cross our purposes ?”

“ Marry,” answered the furrier, “ because we dare. It is not thy angry looks, nor the lances of thy pillaging companions, that can affear the English yeomanry. There be some among us who can draw a good bow and wield a brown bill with the best of ye ;” and he made his weapon whistle around his head.

“ Good honest brutes,” said Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, who stood beside the abbot, “ get ye home to your cabins. Heaven hath made a stuffed pourpoint no match for a Bourdeaux spear ; and ye are like to feel its edge if ye are not wise enough to travel.”

“ Travel !” exclaimed one of the rustics, “ thou art the travelled monkey I wis — look at his tail.”

The mob roared with laughter at this

satire upon the long gown of the Frenchman, which trailed in the dust.

“He has more cloth on his back,” cried the furrier, “than would cover ten horses.”

“Ay, and more gold on his cloak,” said another, “than would buy house and land.”

“He, a louse !” cried a third, “it is no man. See ye not the braided hair and the jewels on her hood and girdle ? It is some harlotry queen in a knight’s mantle.”

“Mort dieu !” exclaimed the Frenchman in a rage, “ye filthy dregs ; I would I were armed, to prove my manhood on your scurvy bodies. By Saint Denis, Marcel, you must do me justice on these ragged knaves.”

“Marry, we will do justice on thee, thou French ’mafrodite,” cried the furrier : “thou art of Dispenser’s faction. I know thee by thy court foppery. Thou shalt be hanged in thy finery, like a hawk-haggard, with his hood and bells. But come, lords, what answer make ye

to our demand? shall we have Despatcher, yea or nay?"

"I tell ye nay, ye thrice audacious knaves," cried Du Chatelet; "away, and give free passage to the horsemen."

"By Saint Dunstan of Chad, that we will not," answered the spokesman, "ye shall not so easily pass. If ye will ride ye shall fly, for we will lend ye the goose's wing."

"Rebellious dogs!" ejaculated the marcher; "I shall find a way to tame your insolence. Ho! warder! sound thy horn."

"Ay, sound thy horn, warder," repeated the furrier, "and thou mayest sound often enough before thou wilt puff us away."

The signal was given, more for the purpose of affrighting the rustics than with the intention of summoning the garrison for any warlike purpose, the force under Sir Aubrey Marcel being more than sufficient to have slain the whole mob. However, they were too bold, hardy, and confident to be alarmed

even by the appearance of the whole garrison, who now flocked to the barriers, men at arms, bowmen, and archers, together with the inhabitants of the town.

Among the latter, the abbot Ingulphus, espied the granger, Alan Waldeyff, who, by his order, addressed himself to the mob in the hope of inducing them to retreat. We shall favour our readers with a specimen of his eloquence.

“ Hal Furrier !” cried he to the leader of the rustics ; “ thou burly-boned churl, what fool’s errand art thou leading these knaves upon ? Dost think to do battle against men at arms in a sarsil jack or leather wambais ? Go to, rogue ; thou art training thy fools to the gallows.”

“ Alan Waldeyff !” replied the furrier, “ thou art a saucy jack-in-office, and hast more black in thine eye than white in thy holyday hose.”

“ And thou,” returned the granger, “ dost keep more of the lambskins thou hast to dress than thou dost give back to thy customers. Dick Miller there knows

thou didst palm a mould-warp upon his wife for minever; and art not thou a high waster to set up for a leader of honest men?"

The mob, ever vascillating, turned tail at this accusation; and, leaving the furrer, roared out "The granger! the granger!"

"Good Masters," continued Waldeyff; "I pledge ye my word, as an honest yeoman like yourselves, that these great lords are as fierce enemies of the favourite as any among ye. What! if he were given up to ye, he would but die under your honourable weapons — too good a death for a vile foot-knave like him. No, fellows; let him pass on to the queen. She will twisle his fine jacket, I promise ye. He will die by the torture, as he should do, and all such cogging, flattering, cozening withersakes."

"Ay, ay," cried the inconstant knaves; "let them pass—let them pass, in God's name."

"But Alan," said one of the rustics;

“ mark now thou art leal in this business.”

“ As leal,” replied the granger, “ and as true as thine own slaughter axe, which has no need of more strokes than one.”

“ The queen, thou say’st,” cried another ; “ will plaster his jacket.”

“ Ay, by Saint Dunstan,” rejoined Waldeyff, “ with a coat of green mould ; he’ll never lack another.”

“ Then he will be well covered in,” cried a tiler.

“ As well, Robin,” answered Alan, “ as if thou hadst done it thyself, and with thine own tiles.”

“ Would I had the coping of his grave !” shouted a stone-mason ; “ I would ask no fee.”

“ Thou shalt acknowledge before Yule,” returned the granger, “ that thy hand is well free of the labour.”

The barriers were now thrown open, and the poursuivant, followed by the men at arms, encircling the prisoners, moved slowly forth. In spite of the treble row of hauthoners which sur-

rounded Gloucester and his companions in misfortune, the mob got sight of them, and set up a most deafening cry of exultation and execration, which rang in their ears for many a mile after they had quitted the town.

CHAP. XII.

I saw a friar i' the market-place,
Some hermit Peter : so well he look'd austerity,
And was so gifted with soul-catching words,
So artful was he 'neath a cloak of candour,
That lies, which, in the open day, would meet
Loud reprobation and indignant scorn,
From him were taken as a voice from Heaven.

JOAN OF ARC.

As the prisoners and their escort withdrew from sight, the abbot and his guests left the gate, and returned to the monastery. The Baron Du Chatelet, after giving some directions to the warder, (wherein he charged him narrowly to observe the mob, which did not appear disposed to disperse ; and in case of the renovation of disorder, to communicate instant notice to himself,) retired also to the castle. The rustics were gathered into several rings or parties of ten, twenty, or thirty, each ; and in every company some spokesman, more forward than his

fellows, took the labouring oar, and expatiated aloud on the several crimes and misdemeanors of Despenser, and on their consequent punishment. It cannot be supposed that the former were well defined; and indeed the clumsiness of the accusations brought against the favourite, and which were much more easily alleged than substantiated, did frequently awaken an opposition of argument even in the minds of those unlettered and ill-judging clowns. They were all agreed that in the gross his crimes deserved exemplary pains; but in the examination of them separately, they could find none for which he was worthy of capital condemnation. It seemed as if they had forgotten the precise purpose for which they assembled; since no one among them could explain the ground on which it behoved them to put Gloucester to death, had he fallen into their hands; unless it was, as some of them said, because he was a lord, and therefore, of necessity, the foe of the lower orders. This proved a very unhappy and mischievous argument; for it was immediately said that it ap-

plied as well to the queen's friends as her enemies, that it bore as hard upon the marcher and those who accompanied him, as upon the fallen favourite ; and some spoke of attacking the fortress, and putting all the inhabitants to the sword. We will not presume to say what mischief might have been caused by their deliberations, had they been carried into effect ; but they were happily broken off by the intervention of our old friend, the mendicant friar. He had followed Waldeyff out of the town ; and after the departure of Sir Aubrey Marcel and his companions, mingled with the mob, and listened to their arguments. Our readers may have remarked that in some of his speeches, the mendicant spoke in no friendly phrase of the Benedictine monks ; and we might have expected that, *ut verba*, he would have rejoiced at the destruction of the abbey and its inmates. But, to do justice to our friar, we must confess he was not quite so bloody in his hatred, nor quite so desperate in his policy : he could talk with great emphasis and bitterness of the fat and lazy monks ; but his vein for their

disturbance extended no further than slander and vituperation; and it was with the greatest horror he heard of the schemes of this villanous rout, for the capture and sack of the town. We must also consider that the monks and friars, though differing in species, as naturalists observe, were still of the same genus: they were priests and regulars; and although the friars, from the strictness of their rules, could not obtain that store of temporal riches, and consequently that plenitude of temporal power of which the Benedictines, unrestrained by any prohibition, were in possession, and therefore might well have been suspected of casting an evil eye upon their more ambitious brethren; yet they were not willing to give an handle to the laity for despising and oppressing the whole priesthood, by any action of deliberate annoyance, arising out of an uncharitable and unchristian-like spirit. Besides, our mendicant, although a wild, drunken, and idle beggar, was by no means an ill-natured man: he was rather of a contrary disposition; and he himself affirmed, that it was his bene-

volent temper which led him into such gross and unchurchmanlike excesses. However this may be, it is certain that at this time he exerted himself for the service of his rivals, and commenced his labours by requesting the rustics would lay aside their discussions, and give him an attentive hearing in the name of God. This solemn invocation, combined with the sanctity of his character as a friar, and also as a pilgrim, the badges of which profession our readers are already apprized he wore, gave him an authority with the mob as wonderful as it was unbounded. In fact, with the superstitious and uncultured churls, his escalloped hat and croissed coat acquired him more reverence than the mitre and crosier of the abbot did their possessor; and at the request of the friar, they, without hesitation, abandoned their several orators, and in silent expectation surrounded the place where he stood.

“Beloved sons,” cried the friar, raising himself as high as possible in order to be the more conspicuous, “beloved sons—”

“Mount the barrier, holy father,” cried a voice from the crowd; “we shall hear ye the better.”

The friar, with the assistance of Waldeyff, ascended the barrier, upon which he sat astride as upon horseback.

The granger whispered in his ear, as he gave him his assistance, “Now, friar, hatch up some lie, to clear us o’ these mad cocksetts; say aught, as ye know how, to gull their consciences, and I will stand ye in a flaggon of Bourdeaux.”

The mendicant gave him a significant wink; but instantly resuming a staid and sanctified demeanour, proceeded to address the people in the following strain.

“Beloved sons, or not beloved sons ye are either, as ye do hearken and obey, or are deaf and unheeding to my warning voice. A vision did whilom appear to me as I lay in my cell, meditating the devout life of Saint Dunstan, *cujus nomen sit benedictus*—a heavy sleep did oppress my faculties, and I felt as though the hand of death, *rex ipse terrorum*, was upon me; earth seemed flitting away like an ill-remembered dream, and the

chaunt of the seraphim, thrilling me with heavenly harmony, enveloped all my senses. This paradise of delight held me not long : I heard a voice, crying, ‘Adrian, Adrian;’ and I answered, ‘Here am I.’ The figure of the venerable Dunstan was instantly before me; he cried, ‘Up, arise, gird on thy cloak and walk; rest not until thou hast paid thy vows at Beverley; for thereon hangs the safety of England, and thine own salvation.’ Beloved brethren, I tarried not for day; but seizing my hat and staff, and providing myself with this scanty scrip, I left our house and journeyed northward. Many a long mile, and many a foul road did I encounter in my pilgrimage—*Deus sit laudatus, qui in periculis est meum adiutorium*—without shoes on my feet or shirt on my back, hungry and athirst, parched in the drought, and drenched in the storm, I pressed onward to the shrine of Saint John, and sped my vows.”

The rustics were heart-stricken at the picture of misery and self-devotion drawn by the friar, and condoled with him in groans of sorrow, and murmurs of com-

miseration. So far from doubting the veracity of his narration, they imagined he concealed the heavier portion of his sufferings, and gave him credit for ten times more than he had the impudence to impose upon them. Numbers pressed forward, and made him small offerings of money, which he very thankfully accepted, and deposited in his scrip. Alan Waldeyff again whispered him, "Well done, friar, thou hast the very devil aneath thy tongue." The friar answered him with an hypocritical grimace; and then turning to his auditors, continued his homily.

"Worthy and beloved sons, I had a second vision at the shrine of Saint John. Saint Dunstan did again visit me; and as a reward for my obedience to his mandate, did present to me this relic." He drew forth the piece of wood upon which he would have taken the oath of Fierabras, and held it up for the inspection of the crowd.

"Marry, what is't?" cried one fellow, placing his hand above his eyes to shield them from the sun; which, though in the

beginning of October, was somewhat powerful. "Is't a thwittle shaft?"

"Ay, or it may be the half of a shuttle," said another; "dost note, it tapers to the end, and is biggest i' the middle? I warrant Saint Dunstan was a clothier, and made many an ell of stout broella."

"'Tis more like he was a butcher," cried one of that fraternity, "if ye go by likes; for 'tis the very model of a thwittle shaft, and white ash to boot."

"Hush! the friar's about to speak," exclaimed a third.

"Beloved sons," said the friar, resuming his discourse, "I behold wonder and curiosity depeinten on your faces at the mere sight of this holy relic, of which ye know not the nature or properties; but how much will your wonder be increased, how infinitely will your curiosity be augmented, when I tell ye that this piece of wood, simple as it looks, did form part of that cross which bore our Redeemer at his sacrifice? Yes, beloved, this precious fragment is stained with the blood of the incarnate Godhead: this

hallowed cante sustained him in his bloody agony who died for the salvation of ye all. Ah! now I see ye are touched, and well may ye be; for ye do stand, as it were, in his very presence; and he beholds ye with eyes of love, shedding the precious drops of pity upon his sufferings. Beloved, since I have attained the blessed chance of possessing this glorious relic, I hold my life as dust, my race as run, my time as of the world to come, and not as of this world; would that I could this moment depart in the midst of ye!"

Murmurs of pity, wonder and admiration, followed this extraordinary narration. The crowd pressed more closely around the friar, and some of them who were nearest to him kissed the hem of his cloak. Those of more warlike character, the yeomen and military vassals, brandished their weapons with looks of indignation, and, like Clovis of France, swore had they been living at the time of their Saviour's crucifixion, they would have revenged him on his enemies. We will not say that this expression of feeling by

a mob of yeomen, butchers, clothiers, fullers, fletchers, masons, and carpenters, had an air quite so romantic as that of the monarch at the head of his warlike Franks; but we will say that this mob was as capable of appreciating the sufferings of their Redeemer, as the fierce and uncultivated, and, but lately, heathen sovereign. The mendicant bore their adulation with as great sobriety and hypocrisy as his prototype, Saint Dunstan, could have done; and to their blessings and cheers replied only by a new infusion of mortification into his sallow countenance. The granger, to whom the part acted by father Adrian gave infinite pleasure, pinched his legs as the only means of testifying covertly the excess of his admiration; but the friar, as might be seen by the contortions of his visage, could well have dispensed with this proof of his gratification. To put an end, therefore, to Waldeyff's compliments, the mendicant again addressed himself to the people.

“Brethren,” he proceeded, “I have yet to deliver to ye the charge wherewith

this relic was accompanied. The holy Saint Dunstan, on placing it in my hands, said, ‘Arise, Adrian, and go forth ; return to thy monastery ; thou wilt find work by the way—*tua peregrinatio est ad opus Domini*—and do thou maintain his glory in thy handiwork. Thou shalt be a peace-maker among men,’ he continued ; ‘out of thy mouth shall flow persuasion, as it were the mouth of an angel ; and this relic of the holy cross shall be unto thee as a sign of authenticity. They who see shall believe ; and like unto those who in my day of terrestrial penance did hang upon my words, shall thy auditors listen unto thee, and give credit to thy counsel.’ The canonized spirit did then flit away, leaving me to wend homeward, after the performance of my vows.”

The friar paused again, and the rustics entered into short snatches of conversation. One of them said he was as good a man as Saint Dunstan himself.

“Ay, marry,” cried another, “and better ; for ye see Saint Dunstan’s spirit cannot rest, nor his bones lie still in the grave ; which is proof of his having been no better than he should be.”

“By our Lady,” returned he who spoke first, “’tis well an he were as good; and, as thou didst say, ’twere like he was a butcher; I tell thee it seems to me he did use bloodier weapons than a Sheffield thwittle.”

“Marry, thou hast hit it,” replied his companion; “as sure as my name’s Bogie Brown, Saint Dunstan was a murderer. Ay, by our Lady, he cut the throttles of men ’stead of pigs and calves, and is now sweating for’t in purgatory.”

“Marry, ye are two asses,” cried a man who had overheard their sage demonstrations; “Saint Dunstan was a holy monk, and did vanquish the devil in single fight.”

“Then must he have been the devil’s peer,” returned the first speaker; “and that proves my story.”

“As how?” cried the intruder.

“Why, marry, either the devil or St. Dunstan must have been the prover; and the saint would not have fought had the devil been worse than himself.”

“Then he must have found a champion,” rejoined the controversialist;

“ and who is there for hire would encounter the devil ? ”

“ Well, I say,” cried the other, “ good day for him was it when the devil fell under his staff.”

“ Staff ! ” said his antagonist ; “ the saint fought with a pair of red-hot pincers, and grasped the devil by the nose.”

The other two stared with wonder at this probable account ; and one of them replied to the vindicator of the saint, “ Marry, thou art a cozening knave ; and we are two asses to put any trust in thy lies : I warn thee to beware, or the devil will gripe thee by the nose, despite thy pains to please him.”

“ Thou art an uncivil cullion,” returned his adversary ; “ and but I should anger the holy friar, I would bloody thy coxcomb with my quarter staff.”

“ Hold thy hand, bonny Ralph ! ” cried the other, grasping his brown bill ; “ thou knowest here it never rains but it pours : I can make shaft and steel fly as well as thy father’s son.”

“ Why spar ye at this rate ? ” said the

third, endeavouring to mediate between them ; “ what matters it to either of ye whether Saint Dunstan or Saint Devil was victor ? Be friends — be friends, and let not the holy father see your folly.”

At this admonition Ralph was pacified, and held out his hand ; which his adversary accepted, and shook by way of ratification of their treaty of peace.

The friar concluded his oration in the following words. “ Beloved sons ! ye now know my authority — ye have been witnesses of my passport to your consciences ; and if there be any man who has witnessed and does yet disbelieve, it shall be worse for him hereafter than if he had been an heretic or an usurer. The words which come out of my mouth are not mine own ; they are Christ’s — *via sine devio, vita sine termino, est mihi Christus*. Believe, then, as ye would if ye were now to see the heavens opened, and to hear a voice of thunder issue out of the clouds. The day, beloved, is an evil day — a day of sin and sorrow, of suffering and tribulation of spirit. The wrath of God is on the land : the king

and his minions have fallen beneath the rod; which, like that of Moses, is prepared to swallow them up. But do not ye lift up your hands against the anointed — do not ye pluck upon yourselves the indignation of the Most High; leave their chastisement to whom it belongs — the Lord of mercy and of justice. And oh, dearly beloved brethren! above all things, I charge ye from mine innermost soul, by Mary, sancta spousa Dei; by all the saints of heaven, and your hopes of paradise; by your living fame and your dying agony; by your Redeemer himself, and aught else that can have power and persuasion with your consciences; — dare not to assail the habitations of the clergy. They are men whose good deeds ye cannot know, but by the estimation of their loss; they are fathers who seek no earthly enjoyment but for the good of all: their power is a blessing, as those of ye may know who live under such mild and benevolent lords; and their ruin, in place of adding aught to the good and well-being of the public, would sink ye into the last extremity of want,

wretchedness, and woe. Leave, then, I beseech ye, all things to those whom God hath appointed his instruments of judgment; suffer the king, if king he be, to remain here or journey whithersoever the lords, his keepers, shall ordain. Let his favourites, wicked as they are, enjoy the benefit of trial; and, if innocent, in the name of heaven, let them escape punishment. Be advised in all things by your spiritual superiors of this holy abbey; and treat the fathers, as becomes ye, with all honour and reverence. These things done, the blessing of heaven will cleave unto ye now and for ever. Brethren! I must bid ye farewell; but in the silence of my cell, and in the hour of my death, I shall remember ye. My prayers shall ever be for ye, and for your children, to the remotest generation. Brethren! once more farewell; I entreat ye instantly to separate, and each man to betake himself peaceably to his home."

The crowd of rustics hailed the conclusion of the mendicant's address with loud shouts of applause; and, as a proof

that they had not heard him without receiving benefit from his exhortations, they began gradually to disperse. Those, indeed, who had composed the outermost circle which surrounded him, and who, therefore, had not been sufficiently near to catch a perfect view of his person, which they doubtless thought extraordinary, occupied the places, adjoining his station, of those who had withdrawn ; and for some moments remained motionless, gazing with devout and intent looks upon his figure and physiognomy. Their curiosity satisfied, these also retired from the barriers, leaving the friar, attended by Waldeyff and some few of the townsmen. They had not, however, retreated three hundred yards from the gate, when a novel sight again collected them, and brought them back to the barrier. This was no other than the appearance of Sir Roger Taillebois and his daughter on horseback, attended by the young lady's women and an escort of fifty men at arms. The old baron, judging from the firm and erect seat he kept on his palfrey, was little

troubled by his wound, though, (as he wore a huge mantle of red cloth, called a *chape à pluie*, from its being used in stormy weather, and which was lined with greys or *fur de gris*,) it was probable he was under the obligation of avoiding cold. The figure of Blanche, who rode at her father's side, was entirely enveloped in her hood and mantle; whilst her face, which the hood left exposed, was much screened by the close adjustment of her silken wimple: her eyes, which had usually a brilliant and expressive animation, were now as opposite to their accustomed splendour as the whiting's eyes, which Estifania accuses the copper captain of having palmed on her for pearls, must have been to the jewels they were intended to represent. She turned them neither to the right nor to the left, and held her bridle rein so carelessly, that her palfrey had his own free pleasure to go at what rate might best please him. She did, indeed, seem so indifferent to what was passing around her, so heedless of those gazes which were fixed upon her, and so

abstracted from all exterior impressions, that when her horse halted at the barriers, she started with such violence as nearly to throw herself out of the saddle ; but, after a hasty and fearful glance at the gate, she relapsed into a solemn and immoveable apathy. The cavalcade, constrained to await the communication of the baron's arrival to the marcher, drew up in front of the gate, and was instantly environed by the multitude. The rustics, eager to gratify their impertinent curiosity, and emboldened by their numbers, pressed onward to the very heads of the horses ; and circulated their jokes upon the retainers of the baron, and even upon Taillebois himself, without any fear or regard of evil consequences. Nay, some of the more confident of the ruffians passed their coarse satire upon Blanche, whose insensibility happily prevented her from noticing their malevolence.

“ Hey, Bogie !” cried one of them, who throughout the whole day had made himself conspicuous by his noise and impudence ; “ dost see the wench ? Marry,

for the little ye may spy of her white-washed face, she might have seen the graunt*, or some ill sight, I trow."

"Is not this she," replied Bogie, "that they say is to marry the marcher? and did not her father, that sits so stately here on his ambling nag, wash his hands in the blood of the verderor?"

Taillebois, who caught somewhat of the fellow's speech, cast upon him a glance of hasty but fierce resentment. Not in the least daunted by this expression of the knight's displeasure, Bogie, to whom the association of his fellows gave courage and confidence, proceeded, "Ay, ay; other folk can shake their noddles I wis, Sir Baron; and were I Alan Waldeyff, and the kinsman of Hubert de Hautbois, I would soon see whether that cloth cloak were proof against a witch hazel shaft."

The truth of the matter is, that Alan Waldeyff, who needed no spur to avenge his kinsman, had been lectured as to his intention by the Abbot Ingulphus, who,

* The graunt, as mentioned by Gervase of Tilbury, was a spectre, devil, or apparition.

upon consideration of the circumstances, finding the prosecution of the granger's feud might endanger the good understanding now subsisting between the marcher and himself, which, at this time, it was necessary to preserve, abandoned his former approbation of Waldeyff's resentment, and charged him, as he valued his life and station, to waive his resolution, and forego his revenge. To the commandment of his superior the granger reluctantly acceded; and having once given his word that he would not attempt the life of Taillebois, he virtually laid aside all thoughts of further evil towards him. The good fortune of the rustic so chanced it, that his speech did not gain the ear of the baron, who, at the moment, was engaged with the return of the warder. The threat of what he would have done in Alan's situation, had it reached Sir Roger, would perchance have given cause to one of his own kinsmen to hold the baron in like feud; for the Red Knight of Harding, as we have before noted, was seldom hesitating in a fiery mood; and would have thought as

little of steeping his basillard to the hilt in the blood of a churl, as in that of a wild boar, or stag at bay.

The portal was now thrown open, and, as a guard against the intrusion of the malcontents, several score archers and dismounted men at arms were ranged from the gate to the barriers, ready to fall on in case of any disturbance. By good fortune, or the eloquence of the Mendicant, the mobility were disposed to remain peaceable, and the cavalcade passed the gate, followed by the garrison soldiers, without interruption, though not without being pursued by hoots and hisses. The injunction of the friar was, however, soon forgot; for they again formed into companies after the portal was closed, and, with loud shouts, dared one another to deeds of insolence upon the fortress. The younger and more daring leaders of the mob leapt the barriers, and, advancing to the portal, struck fiercely and heavily upon the gate with their brown bills and pole-axes: others, who were not quite so bold, stood without the barriers, and discharged a

flight of arrows over the town-wall, which, though happily innocuous, occasioned no slight alarm to the inhabitants. Notice of these bravadoes was instantly sent by the warder to the castle; and the baron ordered two companies of men at arms, each consisting of one hundred spears, to mount and issue from the postern, and, each taking a different course, to meet and surround the rustics in front of the gate. This scheme was executed in a few minutes, and the mob found itself not only beset on each side, but also from the portal, which being thrown open, poured forth several hundred archers and cross-bow men harnessed for battle. The surprise bereft them of all courage. The men at arms advanced at full gallop with their lances couched, and among this badly armed and naked multitude would have committed terrible havoc. The archers stood with their arrows notched, and the cross-bow men had their bows ready bent; every thing warned them of approaching destruction. The stoutest hearts among them quaked with terror;

and when the hauthoners were within a few spears' length of their outermost ranks, the whole body threw themselves on their knees, and bellowed out for mercy. Bonnelance, one of the body-squires of Sir Bertrand du Chatelet, who had the command of this adventure, made a sign to his companions to halt, and from the mob selected half-a-dozen of the ringleaders, upon whom he said the baron would inflict summary justice. These men he sent under a guard to the castle; allowing the remainder to disperse, who, very willingly, and very speedily, made good use of his clemency

CHAP. XIII.

Your cruel treatment of my passion —
But I'll not talk. — This, madam ; only this —
Think not the cause, the cursed cause of all,
Shall laugh secure, and triumph in my pangs :
No ; by the torments of an heart on fire,
She gluts my vengeance, who defrauds my love !
The Brothers.

WE shall now attend upon the old Baron of Harding and his lovely daughter, who had by this time dismounted from their horses, and entered the hall. Du Chatelet was in attendance, and welcomed them with as hearty a reception as the robber gives to the feeble and wealthy traveller who requests admission to his den. His eye sparkled with delight as he gazed upon the figure of Blanche, who, to avoid encountering his glances, had drawn her wimple still closer over her face, so that her nose and eyes were alone visible. He did not remark the enve-

loplement of her figure, nor that her charms were veiled, so much was he taken up with the pleasure arising from her appearance; and shook the hand of her father with a wildness and extravagance of spirit which had never before been remarked as pertaining to his character. Taillebois, in whose bosom the extremes of good and bad were alike predominant, did not pay any particular attention to a conduct which so nearly resembled his own; but returned his greeting with a shake equally warm and equally free from ceremony.

“By our Lady, Taillebois,” cried Sir Bertrand, “I am glad to see thee, both for thine own sake, and because thou bringest with thee the saint of my adoration. She is well, I trust, and thou also? Thou did’st get my message?”

“Ay, Bonnelance did thine errand trustily,” answered Sir Roger. “But, where is the king? And Lancaster! is he here?”

“Lancaster and his attendants,” returned the marcher, “are at the abbey, and well it is so; but Edward is here with

me. The favourite left Malpas some hours ago under an escort; and, hark ye," he continued, drawing Taillebois on one side, "Fierabras doth accompany Aubrey Marcel, who leads the division, bearing my letters to the queen and Mortimer. What thinkest thou they will give for the king's head?"

He smiled triumphantly on communicating this political scheme to the Knight of Harding, who replied, "They will give royally, Du Chatelet; but, dost thou not think the King and Despenser would have paid thee better? They were in thine hands, and the fear of being delivered to the queen —"

The marcher shook his head, and said, "No, Taillebois. They did, in sooth, bid fairly for my alliance; and, could I have found a way for restoring the king his crown, by Saint Edward I would have joined his faction; but the queen's force is one hundred thousand men at arms, and what peer in England may resist it? To have joined Edward, even as second in the realm, would have been madness. I knew too well the strength of each

party, to cast my weight into the losing scale; but, as I still am master of the king's fate, and can either send him guarded to London, or convey him to a place of safety where he might give trouble to the amorous queen and her gallant, they shall pay my price or be losers of the ware."

"But what says Lancaster?" cried Taillebois: "he is Edward's kinsman, though his house hath felt his tyranny."

"The earl does not suspect my policy," answered the marcher; "nor would I have him. If the bargain take effect, I have stipulated for secrecy. Though I fear no man living, and can guard my right with the strong hand, yet a feud with Lancaster is not needlessly to be sought. His valour and chivalrous spirit render him as popular with the multitude, as do his birth and courtesy with the nobles of England."

"But he must know, and so must the world," cried the knight, "of your dealing with the queen, when you publicly place him in her hands."

The marcher smiled, and replied, "For

that, too, have I provided. I will reap the profit, Taillebois, while the blame and the shame do fall upon Lancaster ; for I have so fashioned my agreement, unknown to all, either the meddling priest Ingulphus, or his knavish brother, that when the king doth quit my castle, he shall have the wise earl for his protector. Seest thou now my drift, Sir Baron ? and what thinkest thou of my plan ?”

“ By Saint Austin,” replied Taillebois, “ thou dost amaze me with thy cunning. Our late king, Edward Longshanks, renowned through the world for his wisdom and policy, would have been no match for thee at scheming. But, after all, Du Chatelet, I like not this delving in the dark, this yielding of bold and manly force to a crafty and courtier-like dissimulation. By my soul, I hold one blow stricken i’ the field worthier than a thousand traps manufactured in the closet.”

The brow of the marcher grew black as night ; but in a moment cleared again. He looked steadily at the knight, and

said, " Taillebois ! thou dost know that I am no skulker in the field : thou dost know that, among the English chivalry, there is no knight that with better will doth lay lance to his saddle-bow in the fierce roar of battle than Bertrand du Chatelet. To me the love of thy daughter, returned with an ardour equalling mine own passion, would be ungrateful, nay, hateful, if it withheld me from that martial strife which gives joy and animation to my soul. But that I should bootlessly incur popular hatred, and make myself a mark for kingsmen to shoot at, when my own interest may be served by a politic reservation, and that without danger or suspicion, would argue me a witless fool, and not the bold knight your counsel points at."

" Use thy discretion, son," said Sir Roger ; " but what think'st thou will be King Edward's fate?"

" Death !" answered the marcher bluntly : " Isabel and her minion have gone too far to stop now at aught. If she will keep her power, and Mortimer his life, they must not be sparing of

Edward's blood. The fate of Glo'ster, who is marked for the slaughter, may restore the king to popular favour, and what then becomes of them?"

"But is Isabel so foul," cried the Baron of Harding, "that she does not hold sacred her husband's life?"

"Sacred!" replied Du Chatelet, mocking the word to the very echo; "hast thou seen the wolf-bitch, or the mountain-bear? To them their common prey is as sacred as her husband's blood to this false French woman; — but let us quit this subject, and tell me, Taillebois, when may I expect thy daughter's hand? I swear to ye by the Virgin, I burn until I possess her."

"Thou must quench the fires of thy love," answered Sir Roger, "with the waters of thy wisdom; for she has won me over to grant her a month's deferment of your union."

"A month!" cried Du Chatelet; "say an age; a million of years. — By my soul, Sir Baron, this is not friendly; if she is to be mine, why not to-day as well as a month or a year hence?"

“ I am her father,” answered the knight, “ and it wounds my very heart’s core to put force on her inclinations. Thou canst not know my feelings, Sir Baron; if thou didst, thou would’st easily excuse an old man for granting a small favour to the daughter of his love, which was prayed for as if she begged her life at my hands.”

The old baron was so overcome by the poignancy of his paternal affections, that the tears rolled down his face, and he was constrained to seat himself on a tressel until the storm was over. Blanche, who had hitherto reclined on a broad settle surrounded by her women, observing by their whispers and looks of curiosity, that somewhat extraordinary had happened, rose up, and perceiving her father in tears, broke from her attendants, and flew towards him. Sir Roger clasped her in his arms, whilst Blanche, though unacquainted with the source of her father’s grief, mingled her tears and affliction with his. The marcher stood gloomily silent, nor attempted, by any offers of condolence, to chase their de-

jection ; but Sir Roger, to whom his daughter's tears were more precious than orient pearl, dried up his own, and attempted to comfort her.

“ Fie on thee, Blanche,” he said, sobbing at each word ; “ fie on thee, wench ; what dost thou cry for ? eh ! Du Chatelet has most reason to cry, for having lost thee a month longer. He would have thee to shorten this term, Blanche ; what sayest thou ? ”

She did not raise her head, which was hid in her father's bosom, but violently waved her hand as if in protest against any such alteration. The Baron of Harding, who seemed very well to understand the meaning of her sign, replied, “ Well, well, be it thine own way, then ; the marcher must wait thy time, for I have said thou should'st have it ; but trust me, Blanche ! thou art unwise in this matter, and if thou would'st hearken to counsel — ”

She made a more passionate wafture than at first, and her father continued, “ Well, Blanche, I have done : thou shalt hear no more on't, but — ”

“ The Lady Blanche,” said Du Cha-telet, interrupting Sir Roger, “ will make this term, I trust, the furthest period of her delay: she knows not the anguish of hope deferred to a lover whose breast is like the crater of some burning mount, which, unless it have way, will burst forth in fire and devastation !”

“ Though the flame were to devour my wretched body,” cried the damsel, raising herself upright, and speaking in a solemn and measured strain, “ and to reduce it to vile dust and ashes, I swear, by our Lady Mother, but for my father’s command, I would brave its terrors. Thou may’st threaten, Sir Baron, but no one of our house did ever tremble at the word or the frown of mortal man.”

“ Beauteous Blanche !” exclaimed the Baron: “ I meant not to threaten ye, however angry my words might sound. But, for the love of heaven, dismiss thy disdain, and cast a look more gentle upon him who but lives on the bounty of thy smiles. For thy love hath this arm laid many a valiant man on the bloody field, and hath of late won me a prisoner

whose ransom will plant a coronet on that frowning brow."

"A coronet!" cried Blanche with superlative contempt; "and dost thou think, Sir Knight, that the glitter of a crown could smooth away the frown from the brow of misery, or pluck the scorpion of despair from the broken heart? Will a coronet stand ye in place of content, and happiness, and love? Ah, no; the garlanded queen, unblessed by these sweeteners of life, is but the masker Death, without all gold and tinsel, within a heap of rotten bones. — Away, away — let me hear no more."

"Tut, tut, wench," cried her father; "thou art an absolute fool thus to despise the honours of this world, which all that are wise unceasingly aim at. But thou wilt anon know better. Ha, what knights are these, son, entering the hall?"

"The Earl of Lancaster and his friends," replied the marcher, advancing to meet them. The Earl, attended by the abbot, Sir Paschal, and Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, came forward;

and the former said, that, having heard of the arrival of Sir Roger and his daughter, they had taken the liberty of paying their respects to the young lady, which he very courteously did. The marcher seized Sir Raimonnet by the arm, and, taking him on one side, said “ Now, Sir Raimonnet, be thou judge between the poursuivant and me. Behold Blanche Taillebois, and declare from thy soul if she be not fairer than the Lady Morgana: approach her, man, and look at her narrowly; she will not shame thy scrutiny.”

The mantle and hood of Blanche having been removed by her women, she appeared in a robe of cherry-coloured diaper, lined and edged with minever: her face, as she now stood rather inclined to one side, was concealed from Du Chatelet and the Frenchman, by the fringed ends of her silken wimple or couvre chef which hung down from her head like those of a Mohammedan turban. She received the Earl of Lancaster with great frankness and courtesy; but to the abbot and Sir Paschal Marcel, whom she considered as bearing a part in that con-

spiracy which had robbed her of liberty, she was cold, distant, and haughty. A frown of sober and settled dislike gathered over her countenance, and to their civilities she replied in brief and unceremonious monosyllables. The Earl gazed upon her with admiration, and whispered to himself that the Lady Blanche did well deserve those praises bestowed on her by Du Chatelet.

The Frenchman now advanced rendre ses devoirs. He drew off his hood and held it, not under his arm, gentle reader, as a gallant of this day would his chapeau bras, but dangling in his hand, like the reticules which are suspended from the fingers of our fair contemporaries. The pacific dress of Sir Raimonnet was as singular and as gaudy as his war caparison. He wore a short tunic of cloth of baudekyn *, a kind of silk or brocade, the ground of which was blue, but so entirely overlaid with flowers and figures

* Baudekyn, Pannus auro rigidus plumato-que opere intertextus. Cloth of silk, gold brocade. Spelman's Glossary.

of gold that little, if any, of the colour was perceptible. His waist was compressed almost to a shadow by means of his girdle, which was one mass of goldsmith's work, studded with pearls and precious stones; attached to which was his basillard in a scabbard of blue velvet, gaily embroidered. His tunic was open from the waist downwards; so that, at every step, you could not only perceive his hose, but also the bracci or drawers to which they were attached, and which resembled, in point of shape, the short trews of a Highland Scotsman. His hose and drawers were of two colours, as was at this time the fashion among the young and gay nobility both of England and France; which piece of ridiculous foppery drew upon them the satire of many contemporary authors. The hose of Sir Raimonnet's right leg was of the same stuff as his tunic, and the drawers of sangroyne or blood red, whilst the hose of the left was of the red colour, and the drawers of blue baudekyn. This fashion might, perchance, be borrowed from the jesters with whom it was a common habit. The

Frenchman's boots, to use the words of an author treating on the fancies of these ages, "were snouted and piked more than a finger long, crooking upwards, which they call crackowes, like devil's claws, and fastened to the knees with chains of gold." Over all, Sir Raimonnet wore a long mantle of crimson cloth, enriched with stars of gold, and lined with sables, attached round his neck by a double cordon of gold twist. His whole habiliments were indeed so costly, that it might be said, without much exaggeration, he bore the price of manors on his back.

Du Chatelet watched, with an eager gaze, the countenance of the Frenchman, who, as he advanced towards Blanche, bowed very low without looking her in the face; but when he had reached the distance proper for the commencement of his compliment, he raised himself upright, and, casting one glance upon her features, cried aloud, "The Lady Morgana, by heaven and earth!"

"Ha! De la Folie" ejaculated Blanche, "thou here!"

“Morgana!” cried Du Chatelet in a voice of thunder. “Speak — speak, Sir Knight! Is this the Morgana of that minion Marcel? But why seek I to learn that damning fact? It is she — there is no other.—Ha! Lady Blanche, this does well explain thy heart’s dislike. The marcher Du Chatelet, ignorant of court flattery and milk-sop courtesy, was not to thy taste. Thou must have some poursuivant, who can spin ye verses by the score, and after sing them to his mistress’s beauty; millions of curses on him and his arts.”

“Hold, Sir Marcher,” cried the abbot, who seemed by his restrained breathing, and enkindled eye, to wax warm and passionate; “hold thine impious tongue. Curse not him who is better than thyself, and who is not here to answer thee.”

“Ha! by my head, I would he were,” replied Du Chatelet, “on this hall floor, armed at all points. On his knees would I make him yield his presumptuous love, and beg for mercy of the man he thwarts.”

“ By the Holy Virgin, Sir Baron,” cried Ingulphus, “ were he here, and thou durst chafe him, he would answer thee to thine own confusion, to thy shame and dishonour.”

The marcher, without replying, except by a smile full of agony and indignation, strode hastily to and fro in the hall ; whilst Blanche, whose secret was now discovered, leaned breathless on the arms of her women. The Earl of Lancaster gazed on her with an eye of compassionate regard, whilst Ingulphus and Sir Paschal took an active interest in her distress. Sir Raimonnet, who had been the innocent cause of this unfortunate elucidation, endeavoured to whisper comfort in her ear, but she was deaf to his attempts at consolation, and he was obliged to remain a silent witness of the misery which his involuntary exclamation had produced. The old Baron Taillebois, whose faculties of discernment were never of the strongest, was now so bewildered by the intricacy and obscurity of the different charges alleged in the accusation of the marcher, to which he wanted

the clue, that, for some time, he could make out nothing but that Du Chatelet was in a passion, his daughter in a paroxysm of grief, and the other persons were in a state between concern and admiration. He had heard the exclamation of Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, and had perceived that it was the lever which gave motion to this entangled machinery; but as he knew nothing of Sir Aubrey Marcel, or the *poursuivant*, as the *marcher* called him, it was several minutes before he could gather that there was some person known to his intended son-in-law, and also to the Frenchman and Abbot Ingulphus, of whom Sir Bertrand was jealous. At length, after much study, he exclaimed, "Hark ye, son, what is the meaning of this? Why do ye thus mount into a passion? and wherefore is my daughter in tears? Who is the man ye speak of that dare presume to love her without my consent?"

"Who is he?" replied Du Chatelet, casting a bitter look upon Ingulphus; "the bastard son of this false priest; a wily courtier; a flattering villain; who,

by his wheedling tongue and specious character, hath wiled your daughter of her heart."

"I tell thee, Baron," cried Ingulphus, "that the fame of Aubrey Marcel is as much clearer than thine own, as his soul and body are more free from stain. Beshrew my heart, but thou dost rouse in me that courage of which I had long dismissed the need; and I do here tell thee, not as a priest, but as a good knight and true, that I defy thee for a liar and shameless slanderer. My boy is not here to guard his honour; but whilst I have life and strength he shall suffer no wrong which I can shield him from. Here is my gage," he continued, throwing down one of his gloves, "and though it be but a frail pledge, I swear by St. George I will redeem it."

"I combat not with priests," replied Du Chatelet scornfully, "nor yet with ancient men. Let thy son answer for thy challenge, and I will do battle against him with my whole soul."

"My Lord Abbot," said the Earl of Lancaster, "and you, Sir Baron, I be-

seech ye for a moment grant me your leave. It does not appear to me that the young poursuivant, Sir Aubrey Marcel, was ever acquainted with the baron's pretensions to the Lady Blanche; he is, therefore, not to blame in the part he has acted. I have known him long; and, to his praise I say it, no knight of greater valour, modesty, and honour, ever rode courser in the field of war. I will, therefore, answer for him on my life, that he is incapable of behaving improperly in any case."

"Ay, but the lady, Sir Earl," cried Du Chatelet; "the lady."

"We have no knowledge," replied Lancaster, "from what Aubrey uttered in our presence, that the Lady Blanche did ever countenance his love. It appears rather that she held him distantly; for he never knew her but under the name of Morgana."

"The portrait! the portrait!" cried Du Chatelet, impatiently.

"He would not show it," answered the earl; "and perchance it resembled another lady."

“ Sir Earl, Sir Earl !” returned the marcher, “ you would screen the pursuivant. If that you say have truth in it, let the Lady Blanche here instantly renounce him, and place her hand in mine. On no other condition will I forego my suspicion.”

The maiden, who had, during this discourse, reclined upon the shoulder of one of her women dissolved in tears, now raised herself from her recumbent posture, and hastily dried them in the folds of her wimple.

“ Sir Bertrand Du Chatelet,” she cried, in a voice struggling betwixt grief and offended pride, “ the will of my father has constrained me to become thine ; another month, if death do not release me the sooner, will place me at thy disposal ; were it otherwise, and I dare speak freely, thou should’st hear more of casting thy suspicion on a helpless maid. To you, my Lord of Lancaster, I am grateful, both for your good opinion, and the knightly manner in which you have embraced my defence ; may God reward you for it ! But I profess not to deny my

knowledge of Sir Aubrey Marcel; nor that I have ever held him in the highest esteem. He was, as Sir Raimonnet De la Folie doth well know, the delight and pride of the court: it was not possible to live there and not know Sir Aubrey; and, knowing him, it was not possible to refuse a proper tribute to his merit. My father's sister, the Lady Annabel Beauchamp, was attached to the queen's chamber; and at her request I was permitted to spend a period in London. At court, and at the different shows and entertainments, I met Sir Aubrey; who, in several tournaments, craved leave to wear my badge and colours. This permission, with my aunt's consent, I readily granted; but took her advice to conceal my proper name under that of Morgana. By my sacred honour, and as I hope for the Virgin's protection, the young knight, in place of being bold, forward, and importunate, was ever, in my company, gentle and modest; more careful to please others, than vain of showing his own qualities or his own importance; which, in the sphere he moved, was not little."

If any of our readers should feel disposed to think some parts of the foregoing speech savoured of a masculine frankness and audacity, they will do well to remember that the manners of the ladies, at the commencement of the fourteenth century, cannot justly be weighed in the balance with the more feminine character of those of the nineteenth. But if the women of the former period were not gifted with that nice sensibility of feeling, that exquisite softness of soul, that excessive, and we might say romantic, tenderness of nerve, which distinguish modern fair ones ; we must also recollect that those of our day cannot boast of sending forth such women as the Countesses of Brittany and Blois, who were found, at need, capable of commanding armies, of fighting battles, and of performing all the duties of wise statesmen, good princes, and consummate warriors. The masculine spirit which these, and undoubtedly most women of that age, possessed, was probably acquired by their habit of presiding over the tournaments ; whereat they so constantly surveyed deeds

of heroic chivalry, that their own bosoms caught the flame, and they became endued with that martial ardour which seemed properly to belong to the men alone. Thus, it is probable, their whole character was masculinized; and their gait, garb, and speech, became more free and unconstrained. We may give, as an example of our hypothesis, a common practice of the women of high rank, in this and the succeeding age; viz. that of leading their knights into the lists at the tournaments, when they commonly rode on coursers of war; the very idea of mounting which, would throw the ladies of modern days into hysterics. But we must conjure our readers not for a moment to imagine, that because the ladies of this era were not quite so feminal in character as our modern dames and damsels, that therefore they were divested of true modesty and virtue. No such thing; the real virtues, honour, fidelity, obedience ad maritum, piety, charity, generosity, &c. never, since the world began, to the moment we are writing, flourished with greater purity and exuberance.

They flourished indeed, and were practised without ostentation; because they were esteemed the indispensable requisites of a lady of fashion, and a passport to the esteem and admiration of the chivalry. Thus the virtues being inlisted into the service of the graces, each communicated to the other a portion of lustre which was not intrinsically its own; like the effulgent moon, which, shedding its splendour on the bosom of the sea, receives in return a softened and reflected radiance.

But to return to Blanche. Her spirited defence had in a great degree calmed the anxiety of her father, which was her principal aim; and as Du Chatelet, however inclined, could allege nothing in diminution of her assertions, he also was constrained to abandon further enquiry.

“Fair Blanche,” he replied, with an artificial calmness, “I take Heaven to witness, it was but the vain boasting of Sir Aubrey which did make me suspect thee of disobedience to thy parent. Thine explanation is sufficient to cure me of all

jealousy; and, by Saint Edward, I heartily crave pardon, both from thee and the Lord Abbot, for those hasty words which escaped me in anger. Have I thy pardon, Blanche?"

"If thou doest deserve it," replied she, with a brow still overcast, "thou hast it, and God amend thee."

"Amen!" said the marcher; "and thine, Lord Abbot?" Ingulphus hesitated.

"Nay, abbot," continued the marcher, "fear me not. If thy son can forget what he has lost, I can easily what he has aimed at. The young eagle will bend his eye upon the sun; but if a fierce ray should scathe him, he must bide it if he cannot better."

Blanche poured forth a long sigh, which did not escape the marcher; but he proceeded without noticing it.

"Lord Abbot, I swear by our Lady of Malpas, I will hold the poursuivant at no feud for this unlucky chance; and I hold it no stain on mine honour to recall those expressions vented by my resentment. I do recall them, and crave his pardon

and thine for what is passed. Art thou now content?"

"If thou meanest sooth, Sir Baron," answered Ingulphus, "I am; and give thee my hand with a free will. I own, with regret, the stain on Aubrey's birth (for which God pardon me) doth now unfit him to aspire in marriage to so noble a lady; but he is young, brave, and adventurous, and will, I trust, carve out his fortune with his good sword."

The understanding between the several parties being restored in statu quo, the abbot and his guests took their leave of the Lady Blanche, her father, and the marcher, and retired to the monastery.

CHAP. XIV.

Forthwith the hubbub multiplies ; the gale
Labours with wilder shrieks, and rifer din
Of hot pursuit ; the broken cry of deer,
Mangled by throttling dogs ; the shouts of men,
And hoofs thick beating on the hollow hill.

Albania.

As in these days of simplicity points of etiquette were not so elaborately studied as they have been since, the residence of Blanche Taillebois, under the protection of her father, at the castle of her proposed husband, was not esteemed by the magistri admissionum of that day to encroach a hair's breadth upon the then discovered world of fashionable formality. Intention was then held the criterion whereby to applaud or condemn, and not those innumerable and indefinable ramifications of *bienseance*, which a sickly and injudicious taste has fostered in modern

times. The maxim of Horace was the universal standard, —

“ Hic murus æneus esto

Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa :”

and those who were unconscious of ill, whose cheeks did not blench with the throe of guilt, might with safety despise those forms which hypocrisy has invented to cloak its turpitude. The oratory of the castle and a chamber adjoining were prepared for the peculiar occupancy of Blanche and her attendants ; where, except at the times of refreshment, she could remain undisturbed. Here, after the hour of dinner, she passed the remainder of the day in deep and sorrowful cogitation. She thought of her future life, like the mariner, who, when his bark is sinking, looks out upon the waters for help, and can descry nothing but the louring sky and boiling waves. Hope itself, which seldom abandons the most wretched, had not one bright hue in his rainbow for her. She might indeed avoid a marriage with the marcher, but the consequence of her resolution would be the death of her father ; of that father, who, however violent and uncouth in the man-

ner of his affection, had ever loved her with the most extreme tenderness. To cause his death—and the rash and savage action which he had already perpetrated, showed him capable of going through with his oath—would, in her opinion, be akin to parricide; and to have the blood of her parent on her head were worse than the certainty of actual misery. She shuddered at the possibility of so dreadful a consummation, and resolved to sacrifice herself at the shrine of filial duty. Blanche also thought of her lover, (for though she had declared the truth publicly respecting her knowledge of Sir Aubrey Marcel, she had not declared the extent of that dominion over her affections which he absolutely enjoyed,) and, as she ran over the many qualities and accomplishments with which he was endowed,—of his noble and generous character, and of the love and devotion which he had manifested in many chivalrous encounters undertaken for her sake,—and when she compared the young, and handsome, and ingenuous poursuivant, with the dark, violent, and menacing Du Cha-

telet, her heart grew sick, and her eyes swam in tears. Her women pressed round her with affectionate officiousness, striving to give comfort to their afflicted mistress; but she would listen to no consolation.

“Comfort me not,” cried Blanche; “but rather pray to the Virgin that ye may find me on the morrow a lifeless corse in my bed. Oh! holy Mary! all wretches have some hope, some golden dream whereby to cling in the hour of mourning; but I—I have nought but woe and peril on every side; no hope, no flattering, though deceitful vision, to cheat me into happiness. All—all is dark with ruin, or coloured with despair. Whither, oh! whither, then, shall a helpless maiden turn for succour? Where shall I seek refuge from that fate which is worse than death? Than death! The grisly monster, so hideous to others, for me has lost all his terrors: he were now indeed dearly welcome.”

These exclamations were heard by her women with infinite grief. One of them, named Florence Merrick, her principal

attendant, and devotedly attached to her, used all the arguments which love and duty could suggest to alleviate her sorrow. She concluded with beseeching her mistress to inform her if it was the fate of Sir Aubrey Marcel which she desired particularly to learn; "because, dear lady," continued she, "my brother Guy, who attends the baron, can soon learn news of him from some of the men-at-arms."

"Bless thee, wench, for the thought," exclaimed Blanche. "Bid him make enquiry, and use caution that his errand be not traced to thee. But wherefore do I wish to learn tidings of Aubrey Marcel? Are we not eternally severed? Is not the bride-mantle of Du Chatelet's wife a pall of death enwrapping me in icy ceremonies? But no matter,—hie thee, girl. I know not why I should wish to hear of thep oursuivant; but it will, perchance, sooth my grief if he be well and in safety."

The damsel left the apartment, but soon returned with a despairing countenance.

"How now, good wench!" said her

mistress ; “ what brings thee back so soon ? and why dost thou wear that dismal aspect ? Is Marcel dead ? ”

“ No, dear lady,” replied Florence ; “ at least I know not ; but our men at arms have returned to Harding.”

“ We must rest content,” said Blanche ; “ it is the will of Heaven. Prepare my chamber, Florence ; I will retire to rest. The oblivion of sleep is now my only refuge.”

In the morning Blanche was awoke by the loud and resonant sound of the horn ; and so soon as she was up and dressed, her father entered the oratory, and bade her be stirring with her breakfast, for that the Baron Du Chatelet and himself awaited her company, to set forth for hawking and hunting. “ The braconier, and the veltrarers,” cried Taillebois, “ and the falconers and ostringers, are ready for the field. Bassingbourne holds thy palfrey, and will attend thee, wench ; so Florence and her mates may rest at home.”

“ Forgive me, my lord,” answered Blanche ; “ but I would tarry myself. The ride of yesterday hath wearied me.”

“ The ride of yesterday !” growled her father. “ What, four miles! by our Lady thou art easily tired. But wearied or no thou must ride, Blanche. The French knight, Sir Rai—Raimon—what do ye call him? has sent his squire to say he will be of our party. Come, bustle, bustle.”

The last information, as it gave her a hope of learning somewhat of Sir Aubrey, and of the means by which her acquaintance with him had been discovered, could she engage the Frenchman in a private conversation, produced an instant change in her resolution; and she consented to accompany the hunters without further objection. She was soon habited in her riding-dress; and after having eaten a slight breakfast, descended with her women to the hall. The Baron du Chatelet, Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, and Sir Roger Taillebois, with a crowd of attendants, foresters, and yeomen, were assembled in the court-yard. Bassingbourne, Blanche’s page, held her palfrey; which, with the assistance of Sir

Raimonnet de la Folie, she mounted ; and the Frenchman, as he assisted her into the saddle, said softly, “ Lady Blanche, ride gently. I have somewhat to say that may import ye highly.”

She bowed her head in token of recognition, and rode on. Du Chatelet now gave directions to pass the postern, and proceed toward the wood of Threap in the march. The postern was soon expanded ; and the hunters and foresters, who were mounted, poured forth with break-neck eagerness. The veltrarers, or dog-leaders, followed with their hounds in leash ; then the falconers ; and lastly, the gentry, surrounded by a company of yeomen on horseback, wearing the colour and badges of Sir Bertrand, and armed with swords and long bows. The morning was such an one as the old Flemish painters delighted to pourtray, viz. where the sun shines brilliantly on a frosted country, thawing the white perriwigs of the trees, and causing them to sparkle with myriads of scintillations. The sky was unclouded, and the birds began to chant forth their matins, as if it had

been the end of Spring instead of the middle of Autumn. The ground was pretty soft; and Sir Roger Taillebois, who was the keenest sportsman of the country, pushed forward with great vigour to the wood, where he employed the foresters in driving the windlass or wanlass; that is, according to the ancient terms of hunting, chasing the deer with horn and hound to a stand, where the gentry might shoot. The old baron brought down the first buck with his own bow; indeed, no one presumed to shoot before him, and he might therefore claim the prize of his precedence without any very extraordinary merit. The Baron du Chatelet amused himself with his hawks, and challenged de la Folie upon several casts. They had both, as gallant knights, remained near Blanche; but the marcher's favourite falcon having taken a long flight which hid him behind the wood, he put spurs to his horse, and galloped forward, saying he would rejoin them instantly.

“Now, Sir Raimonnet,” cried Blanche hastily, “what have ye to say? Be speedy,

for the love of God, lest the tyrant should return. Ho ! Bassingbourne !” The page galloped up to his mistress ; who, turning her head towards the attendant yeomen, continued, “ Keep those knaves at distance. I have business with Sir Raimonnet which their master must not hear of ; thou dost understand me.”

The page bowed, returned to the yeomanry, and engaged them behind in the praise of hawking and shooting with the long bow ; so as to ward off their attention from the lady and the knight.

“ First, fair Morgana,” replied Sir Raimonnet to the enquiry of the damsel, “ or fair Blanche, if that be indeed your name, I have to crave pardon for that luckless, but involuntary error, into which I was betrayed by my transport on beholding you. By my dear soul, and dearer honour, I would beg mercy at thy feet, were we suitably accommodated in time and station.”

“ Be brief, Sir Knight,” cried Blanche ; “ there is no time to waste on idle compliments. I have nothing to pardon, for you have done me no wrong ; but if you

had, the pardon were yours: proceed, I beseech ye."

"Beauteous Blanche!" returned the ceremonious Frank, "it is the fountain of thy goodness which doth wash out the crimes of offenders, and I, a deep one, am most beholden to thy bounty. Would it have served thee, the moment I had wrought that sin unrivalled, my own misericorde should have been pitiless to its master."

"Sir Raimonnet!" cried Blanche impatiently, "no more of this. I am satisfied that however cruel the blow was to me, it was never intended by the hand that struck it. Have ye ought else to say? If yea, say it quickly."

"Ought else! sweet flower of beauty," returned de la Folie; "I have more to say to thee, had we opportunity, than would swallow up the whole day. Have I not to tell ye of the gay tournament, in which I wore your badge before the court of France; of the ladies—the knights—"

"Heaven's grace upon me!" cried Blanche, with somewhat of her father's irascibility; "what has a tournament to

do with my case, Sir Raimonnet ? is this a season for bord and jest ?”

“Jest !” replied the astonished knight ;
“it is all true, by my soul. I am in no humour for jesting. I was about to tell ye —”

“Of that which I care not to hear,” cried the damsel. “If you have aught to say which touches the scene you were yesterday a partner in, or relating to Sir Aubrey —”

She could not utter the bachelor’s surname, though to a perfect coxcomb ; but turned away, and blushed deeply. The Frenchman, happily, did not notice her embarrassment ; but replied, “Sir Aubrey ! gadso, I had nigh forgotten the poursuivant. The truth is, most excellent Morgana—Blanche, I crave pardon—that when the splendour and magnificence of our tournaments, our masques, and the divers other entertainments, which, from our routine of life, do get uppermost in my head, they exclude all other matters not equally interesting. But allow me to ask, my fair queen ! if it was unknown to ye, that Sir

Aubrey left Malpas but the day preceding yesterday?"

"Holy Virgin! yes," replied Blanche, in a whirlwind of surprise.

"Knew ye not, then," continued Sir Raimonnet, "that the Abbot Ingulphus was his father?"

"I declare to ye, no," replied the damsel.

"Nor that Sir Paschal Marcel was his uncle?"

"Not a word. How should I? The park of Harding is the utmost limit of my range in the country; and, at court, my confinement, except on days of entertainment, was strictly to my aunt's mansion."

"But Sir Paschal was well known at court, fair Blanche."

"He might—he might—and I still ignorant of his affinity to Marcel. But whither is Aubrey gone?"

"To join Queen Isabel. He commands the escort of the fallen favourite, Despenser."

"And how, De la Folie, I beseech ye tell me, how came the marcher and

his friends to know my masquing title, Morgana?"

"Fairest Blanche," answered the Frenchman, with a look more thoughtful than he usually wore, "I also am to blame in this occurrence; for coming hither with the Earl of Lancaster, whose guest I have been, and meeting Sir Aubrey Marcel, our conversation naturally turned upon you. Forgive me, if I made bold with your peerless charms. I am, thou knowest, the slave of beauty; and it is my office, go where I may, to be its herald. The marcher, who did little misdoubt under the name of Morgana, the person of the Lady Blanche, took fire at our praises, and would have wagered with Sir Aubrey that he could produce a maid whose beauty, even in our eyes, should surpass the boasted Morgana's. Aubrey refused the wager; but engaged himself to hold a tilt with Du Chatelet for the honour of Morgana and of Blanche Taillebois."

"Merciful Jesu!" exclaimed the damsel; "I can guess the marcher's amazement at hearing ye term me Morgana."

“ But you cannot guess my sorrow, divine Blanche, when I found myself an unconscious aggressor upon your happiness ; when I found that that name which, uttered in the circle of gallantry, lent fire and courage to all hearts, did here, as a spell-word, work rage, and terror, and dismay.”

Their conversation was here interrupted by the approach of the foresters, with Sir Roger Taillebois, who followed a herd of deer at full speed. The quest, which lay on a return, brought them close to Blanche and her attendants ; the latter of whom shot a flight of arrows as the deer sped by, and joined in the shouts of the hunters. The old knight did not stop even to cast a glance upon his daughter, so entirely was he taken up in the ardour of the chase ; but, pushing his horse to the fastest, called out to the yeomanry and foresters —

“ Blow, villains, blow for your lives ; ride, knaves, ride.”

The braconier, who was excellently mounted, succeeded at length, by the help of his *moota canum*, or pack of dogs,

in gaining head of the deer ; which, as is their custom in a hot quest, ran in a closely wedged body. Finding their retreat in that direction cut off, they wheeled round ; and broke away with wonderful speed towards the Dee, which bounded the forest in a westerly direction. Their velocity was so great, that although the yeomanry gave them a second salute as they passed, the shafts whizzed in the air fifty yards behind the last quarry, and fell among the under-wood. Sir Roger Taillebois and his companions again pressed their horses with the spur, and vanished over the velvet greensward, leaving Blanche and Sir Raimonnet de la Folie to resume their conversation. During this time, the Baron du Chatelet did not make his appearance ; but his hawks were frequently seen soaring above the wood, and, at intervals, his voice might be heard ringing out the changes in the mystery of falconry.

The knight resumed the conversation by enquiring, if there was any thing which he could do for Blanche's service ;

“ for, by heaven, fair Morgana,” he continued, “ I am so eager to retrieve the mischief which my unhappy tongue has wrought upon ye, that there is no task, however hard and adventurous, I will refuse, so it may do ye good.”

“ Alas! alas!” cried Blanche, “ I thank ye, Sir Raimonnet, for your courtesy; but it may not advantage me; you can do nothing capable of avoiding my hated marriage with the marcher.”

“ Can I not?” replied the Frenchman; “ do I live to hear the fair Morgana utter a thought so trenchant on my knighthood, which, by our Lady’s grace, I only hold for the service of the beautiful and distressed. Hast thou not seen me, fair Blanche, do somewhat in the lists for the mere fashion of chivalry, and thinkest thou I will avoid a perilous encounter when I may combat for the queen of beauty?”

“ What mean ye, Sir Knight?”

“ To defy this baron to a mortal combat. His death will release thee from all perplexity.”

“ Ha ! gallant chevalier ! ” cried Blanche, with streaming eyes, “ thou art indeed the mirror of knighthood. I can but be grateful for your courtesy, without daring to avail myself of your valour.”

“ I see — I guess — Sir Aubrey — he might deem me officious in this display of my friendship ; but I will satisfy him.”

“ Impossible, Sir Raimonnet — you cannot know.”

“ Pardon me, lovely Morgana, I do know that, in this combat, the arm of Sir Aubrey, who is unmatched as a tilter, either with the coronelled lance* or mortal weapon, would secure your liberty and his own triumph ; whilst I, who am but a young squire in arms, must peril a doubtful issue,”

“ This is not what I would say.”

“ I grant ye,” continued de la Folie, not noticing Blanche’s interruption ; “ that du Chatelet is brave and power-

* The heads of tilting lances were blunt, or fitted with a contrivance to prevent penetration, called a cornel, or cronel, from its resemblance to a crown. — *Grose.*

ful; but he is more used to the throng of war, than the display of skill in singular rencontre."

"Sir Raimonnet, you know not the marcher. He is as crafty, subtle, and politic, as he is doughty and enterprising; your challenge would sooner gain you admission to his strongest dungeon, than it would set you face to face with him in the lists."

"Dungeon!" cried de la Folie, "he durst not imprison a knight who is a-kin to the blood royal of France."

"Durst not, Sir Raimonnet! There is nothing daring, bold, or savage, which this man has not executed; but, if he were willing to respond to your challenge, what plea or occasion could you alledge for your quarrel? Surely not that, as my champion, you defy the man forced upon me by my father?"

"The true reason might be esconced behind some plausible pretext, as a desire to try his skill in arms, and so forth."

"Impossible!" cried Blanche, shaking her head; "Bertrand du Chatelet would not meet you on ground so idle. Besides,

Sir Raimonnet, such a pretext would be no apology for a mortal challenge. The true reason would be brought to light, and then, Sir Knight, judge ye what would be thought of me."

The Frenchman's countenance fell, and he sat for some moments silent; but, at length, his Gallic vivacity getting the better of his dejection, he raised his head and said, "But, fairest Blanche, if the desire I have to serve ye, may not be gratified in this way, how else can I be of use to ye? Spare me not in body or estate. I am your slave unto death."

"I see, Sir Raimonnet," replied Blanche, "that you have yet to learn the cruel and bloody tie by which I was bound unto the marcher; my father, Heaven and our Lady bless him, has anchored his heart upon this match, and though one were to arise from the dead and bid him pause upon his design, he would hold forward without fear or a jot of respect. The character which Du Chatelet bore, and with which, from our neighbourhood, I was acquainted, would alone have given me a mortal hatred to

this union ; but when—” she paused and again coloured ; but observing that Sir Raimonnet listened with a serious and attentive ear, she continued, “ I did, indeed, refuse the match, and would myself have endured all the pains which the human body can suffer, sooner than have placed a willing hand in that of the marcher’s ; but—”

“ Your father,” said the knight, “ by an act of oppressive cruelty, forced ye to his will. This sad tale was recounted both to Sir Aubrey and myself by the Abbot Ingulphus ; and though we deemed the sufferer unknown to us, she did gain the full measure of our pity and regard.”

“ What says the Lord Abbot and the lawyer, Sir Paschal ?”

“ They feel and speak like loving kinsmen. The abbot has already written to his son, informing him of yesterday’s mishap, and forbidding his return to Malpas. They fear treachery on the part of Sir Bertrand.”

“ And well they may ; for his fierce

soul is steeled against all rules of pity, mercy, and honour. He hath no virtue but courage, and that, instead of being tempered by the courtesy of a true knight, doth more resemble the dire ferocity of a savage beast. He talks of love in a strain which must make women shudder, and offers his vows like the druids of old, with the accompaniment of a bloody sacrifice. His master-passion is ambition, which, as a vast whirlpool, doth engulf all his other faculties ; and renders him torpid to the common duties and feelings of humanity.”

“ And can you, fair Blanche, wed this ruffian ? I speak not of Sir Aubrey, who is as noble as the baron is villanous ; as courteous as the marcher is brutal ; as richly bedight with all good qualities and knightly accomplishments as Du Chatelet is desperate, barbarous, and savage.”

“ Break off, Sir Raimonnet, he comes — but if thou dost hear aught —”

“ Of Sir Aubrey,” cried the Frenchman, piecing out the sentence, “ I

will find means to communicate it to thee."

"Bassingbourne you may trust, Sir Knight — he is feal and trusty."

The marcher came galloping towards them with his falcon on his fist, followed by the falconers and ostringers with their hawks recovered. The deer and birds which had been shot and taken were gathered and laid on sumpter horses brought for the purpose; and they now only awaited the return of the baron of Harding and his party to retrace their march. Du Chatelet was in high spirits.

"Lady Blanche," cried he, "thou shouldest have been in the wood to see the pitch my falcon made. He soared so high that to my sight his appearance was no greater than a humming bee."

"The wonder is he should be in sight at all," cried the Frenchman.

"Ay, what wonder is it?" replied the marcher.

"Because I've heard, Sir Bertrand," continued de la Folie, "it is your habit to outstrip all vision. So well are ye taught that the kingly eagle bends

beneath your swoop, — your hawks sure follow your example.”

The marcher, who never dealt in compliment, was puzzled to find out whether Sir Raimonnet spoke in earnest or ironically. His tone was even, and marked with sobriety; but his allusion to the sovereign, Du Chatelet was by no means pleased with; it seemed to argue an acquaintance with his plans regarding the unfortunate monarch, and as the recess of his treachery appeared to be invaded, he grew dark and sullen, and shot glances of rage upon the knight. Unwilling, however, to betray himself by openly resenting the Frenchman's insinuation, the marcher replied, “Thy French wit, Sir Knight, is over keen for an English ear. I profess not to understand thy casuistry, which doth relish too much of the school for a Knight Marcher.”

“I will not push thy learning further,” answered Sir Raimonnet, “and so cavil not at my simile. But we saw thy hawks, and, like good vassals, they did fly their master's pitch.”

“Ha! by the rood,” cried the marcher, with a black frown darkening his brow, “thou banter’st me.”

“Not I,” replied the Frenchman, contemptuously, “as thou art a courteous knight.”

“Perdition seize my soul!” shouted the marcher, laying his hand on a braquemart, or short sword, which hung by his side, “but thou art dead if thou durst utter another word in my despite; here, upon this greensward, where this good arm hath laid a hundred men of renown with their faces to the sky, will I stab the breath out of thine antic body, and give thy carcase to the red hawk and forest raven.”

The frantic violence with which the baron vented his wrath, his desperate and determined action, and the notorious promptitude of his character, begat in Sir Raimonnet de la Folie some fears for his safety. The French knight, a young nobleman of high birth, and who, perchance, in the whole course of his previous life, had never met with opposition in word or deed, (except it were in the

tourney,) had no idea of that coarse and brutal ferocity which usually marks those men habituated to a long and bloody warfare. Ignorant, therefore, as he was, of this uncourteous and uncompromising spirit, it will not be surprising that he should be unacquainted with the only means of repelling it, brute force; nor will it excite our wonder that his soul should quail under the marcher's threat. To have met Du Chatelet in the lists, where he could not have been taken by surprise, and where skill and courage have an equal chance against ferocious strength, would have been different; but here he was naked and defenceless, his weapon being a basillard or long dagger, which would have been entirely inefficient against the marcher's sword. He was, therefore, obliged to content himself with saying he should seek an opportunity of requiting his adversary's incivility.

“That as shall please thee, Sir Knight,” replied the marcher, who was now somewhat more cool, “the time is yet to come when I shall turn my face from a foe.”

The Baron Taillebois and the party of huntsmen and foresters attending him, were now seen advancing at a gentle pace over the heath. In a few minutes the whole party joined, and Sir Roger, with great glee and animation, recounted the sport which he had enjoyed.

“By Saint Hubert and Saint Nimrod,” cried he, ludicrously giving the honours of canonization to the royal sportsman, “I have not had such a day in seven years. What, sirs, we have killed a matter of ten deer by the chase, besides those shot at stand, in driving the wanlass. Why came not the Lord Abbot with ye? He loves the sport right keenly. And the Earl of Lancaster too — he is no skulker, I have heard, when the merry bugle blows in the green wood.”

“They had business,” answered Du Chatelet, seriously; “the earl and his host visit the king this morning.”

The marcher gave his hawk to one of the falconers, and the party, then, at a slow rate, returned to Malpas. Blanche and Sir Raimonnet de la Folie conversed by the way in broken and obscure lan-

guage, whilst Sir Bertrand sat sullen on his palfrey, and perfectly silent. The old knight was the only person among the gentry who retained his good humour ; and he laughed and talked to the foresters and hunters without intermission, until their arrival at the Castle.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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